



Shared Perspectives:

*A Joint Publication on Supporting Students During
and After COVID-19*

*Alliance of BC Students
Canadian Alliance of Student Associations
College Student Alliance
Council of Alberta University Students
Manitoba Alliance of Post-Secondary Students
New Brunswick Student Alliance
Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance
Students Nova Scotia
Union étudiante du Québec
University of Prince Edward Island Student Union*



CONTENTS

MESSAGE FROM THE PARTNERS	3
WHO WE ARE	4
ALLIANCE OF BC STUDENTS	7
CANADIAN ALLIANCE OF STUDENT ASSOCIATIONS	11
COLLEGE STUDENT ALLIANCE	14
COUNCIL OF ALBERTA UNIVERSITY STUDENTS	17
MANITOBA ALLIANCE OF POST-SECONDARY STUDENTS	21
NEW BRUNSWICK STUDENT ALLIANCE	25
ONTARIO UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT ALLIANCE	31
STUDENTS NOVA SCOTIA	34
UNIVERSITY OF PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND STUDENT UNION	38
QUEBEC STUDENT UNION	41

MESSAGE FROM THE PARTNERS

In recent years, a partnership of student organizations across Canada has come together to highlight key issues affecting the country's post-secondary education system. In 2019, [Shared Perspectives: A Joint Publication on Preparing Students for the Workforce](#) looked at how we can promote student employability, skills development, and experiential learning. The year before, [Shared Perspectives: A Joint Publication on Campus Sexual Violence Prevention and Response](#) offered solutions for ending sexual violence on post-secondary campuses. And in 2017, [Shared Perspectives: A Joint Publication on Student Mental Health](#) identified opportunities to improve the mental health resources available to students on campus and in their communities.

Our organizations are dedicated to improving post-secondary education in Canada, whether that's advocating on the issues mentioned above or for high-quality course instruction, improved student financial aid programs, expanded work-integrated learning opportunities, affordable housing options, or increased access to education for students from underrepresented demographics. In all of these discussions, we aim to prioritize student voices and put forward student-centric solutions.

The COVID-19 pandemic has touched all aspects of our society, and post-secondary education is no exception. When institutions abruptly transitioned online in March of 2020, students were forced to quickly adapt to an entirely new learning style—and right before final exams, no less. Many students missed out on summer employment opportunities, exacerbating existing affordability issues, while others expressed security concerns with exam proctoring software. Students have also struggled with anxiety and other mental health concerns as they navigate completing their degrees and entering the workforce during a global pandemic.

We hope these articles spark discussion on how governments, institutions, and other post-secondary stakeholders can work together to best support students and recent graduates as Canada begins to recover from COVID-19.



WHO WE ARE



ALLIANCE OF BC STUDENTS

The Alliance of BC Students is a coalition of five student associations which represents 80,000 students across the province, championing student voices, and fighting for a barrier-free post-secondary system in British Columbia. They are member-driven, student-led, and committed to furthering excellence in student leadership and advocacy.

CANADIAN ALLIANCE OF STUDENT ASSOCIATIONS

The Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA) is a national voice for Canada's postsecondary students. Established in 1995, CASA is a non-partisan, not-for-profit student organization composed of student associations from across Canada. We represent undergraduate, graduate and polytechnic associations. At its core, CASA advocates on behalf of post-secondary students to the federal government. When Canada's leaders make decisions affecting our post-secondary education system, they turn to CASA for solutions.

COLLEGE STUDENT ALLIANCE

College Student Alliance (CSA) is a non-profit, member-driven organization that represents over 61,000 college students across Ontario in partnership with 8 student associations. We perform research and advocacy on post-secondary issues, work in collaboration with post-secondary and governmental stakeholders, and provide a unified voice on-behalf of college students in Ontario. Our goal is to support and improve the college experience through our pillars: affordability, accessibility, accountability, transferability, and quality.

COUNCIL OF ALBERTA UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

The Council of Alberta University Students (CAUS) represents the interests of over 140,000 Alberta university students across Alberta. We represent undergraduate students from the University of Alberta, the University of Calgary, the University of Lethbridge, Mount Royal University, MacEwan University, and Athabasca University to the public, government and other post-secondary education stakeholders. Based in Edmonton, CAUS is a non-partisan and active advocacy group looking to ensure a fully accessible and high-quality system of education in Alberta.



Manitoba Alliance of Post- Secondary Students

Unsatisfied with the lack of coordinated student advocacy in Manitoba and feeling that the relationship between the provincial government and post-secondary students could be improved, the Manitoba Alliance of Post-Secondary Students (MAPSS) was jointly established in the Fall of 2020 by the University of Manitoba Students' Union (UMSU), the Red River College Students' Association (RRCSA), and the University of Manitoba Graduate Students' Association (UMGSA). Currently, MAPSS operates as an informal lobbying partnership comprised of student governments that represent over 61,000 students. The alliance envisions a Manitoba where post-secondary students are treated equitably, are provided numerous experiential learning opportunities, and experience barrier-free access to high quality education and supports. Heading into its second year, MAPSS will continue to focus on conducting research and formulating policy recommendations on issues concerning post-secondary students in Manitoba, while also organizing province-wide educational and advocacy campaigns and formalizing its own governance structure to achieve more meaningful engagement with stakeholders.

New Brunswick Student Alliance

The New Brunswick Student Alliance (NBSA) is the largest student organization in New Brunswick, representing over 12,000 post-secondary students across four member campuses. We advocate for an equitable, affordable, inclusive post-secondary education system where any qualified student can attain a high-quality education while enjoying an exceptional quality of life.

Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance

The Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance (OUSA) represents the interests of approximately 150,000 professional and undergraduate, full-time and part-time university students at eight student associations across Ontario. OUSA's approach to advocacy is based on creating substantive, student-driven, and evidence-based policy recommendations. Our professional government relations practices ensure that we have the access to decision-makers we need in order for our members' voices to influence provincial legislation and policy.



Students Nova Scotia

Students Nova Scotia (StudentsNS) is an alliance of Nova Scotia post-secondary student associations, representing approximately 20,000 undergraduate, graduate, and college students across the province. We help set the direction of post-secondary education by consulting students, researching challenges, developing solutions, and bringing recommendations directly to government. We advocate for an affordable, accessible, and high-quality post-secondary education system that is directed by the student voice.

University of Prince Edward Island Student Union

The University of Prince Edward Island Student Union (UPEISU) is a non-profit democratic representation of students. We are dedicated to fostering pride in the university, the betterment of university life, and enhancing the student experience at UPEI. We value our independence as an organization while maintaining effective relationships with the university and surrounding community.

QUEBEC STUDENT UNION

The Quebec Student Union was created to defend the rights and interests of students by promoting, protecting and improving the conditions of both students and their communities, locally and internationally. It currently represents 91,000 members from across the province.

ALLIANCE OF BC STUDENTS

Student Mental Health: A Crisis Exacerbated by the Pandemic

AUTHORS:

Grace Dupasquier

Anna-Elaine Rempel



Submission prepared on the stolen shared lands of the Skwxwú7mesh, Səlílwətaʔ, and xʷməθkʷəy̓əm Nations. Discussions of mental health and community resilience cannot ignore the devastating and ongoing impacts of colonialism, and we recognize the importance of committing ourselves to the challenging work of decolonization, reconciliation and Indigenization in this and other contexts.

INTRODUCTION: STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH IN THE PANDEMIC

To say that post-secondary students have struggled with their mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic would be an understatement. While the full picture of this issue in BC is not yet known, national data from June 2020 shows that 70% of students were stressed, anxious, or isolated due to the pandemic, and that 82% of students were significantly worried about their futures post-pandemic.¹ Even prior to the pandemic, rates of mental distress amongst post-secondary students in Canada were extremely high, with a 2019 study finding that within the past 12 months, 63.6% of students reported feeling hopeless, 51.6% feeling so depressed it was difficult to function, and 68.9% experiencing overwhelming anxiety.² These rates need to be understood within the wider academic, social, and economic contexts of the pandemic in order to properly support student mental well-being during this time. Social isolation, financial strain, job loss, concern for the future, health concerns, and countless other challenges have led to students experiencing prolonged stress, all while navigating a difficult transition to online learning. These stressors have exacerbated students' pre-existing mental health concerns,³ making it more difficult to maintain academic performance.

Failing to properly support the mental health concerns of post-secondary students during the

pandemic will pose additional challenges as we move forward. A 2017 report from the Mental Health Commission of Canada estimates that unmet or under-treated mental health needs cost the Canadian economy approximately \$50 billion annually.⁴ Most emerging mental health concerns and illnesses can be addressed effectively with early intervention, but as time passes, these issues grow more difficult to treat.⁵ While the long-term impacts of the pandemic on mental health are still emerging, we do know that equitable access to inclusive, ongoing mental health support will be essential to mitigating these impacts over time.

Over the last four years, the Alliance of BC Students has advocated for greater provincial investment in on-campus mental health supports and access to more inclusive counselling services. In response to emerging evidence that student mental health was in significant decline, the ABCS began advocating for targeted investments in front-line mental health services at post-secondary institutions, and for access to free, equitable, and inclusive on-campus counselling services. During this period, the BC government made several investments in mental health services for students and the wider population; however, current levels of accessibility remain below where they need to be.



MAPPING EXISTING STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS

BC's current approach to mental health is informed by A Pathway to Hope, which is a "roadmap for making mental health and addictions care better for people in British Columbia."⁶ Unveiled in 2019, A Pathway to Hope is an ambitious strategy that takes aim at many shortfalls in the province's policies on mental health and addictions. Unfortunately, concerns specific to post-secondary students are not properly addressed and do not feature prominently in the roadmap's goals. The needs of students are often conflated to the needs of "youth," as though these are interchangeable terms for the same demographic. The result is policy that focuses heavily on strengthening supports for "youth," leaving students over 25—who make up 36% of BC's student population—without access to proper care.⁷

A primary example of this kind of policy oversight is the FoundryBC program. Foundry centres are leading-edge health service centres that provide a range of health and social services to young people at free or low-cost rates. Though they provide a "one-stop-shop for young people to access mental health care, substance use services, primary care, social services and youth and family peer supports,"⁸ people over 24 cannot access these services, which means mature students are shut out of this particular line of support. The ABCS's conversations with policymakers have revealed an unfortunate assumption that increasing access to Foundry services is the same as increasing access to care for students in general, but this is not the case.

A Pathway to Hope does have some limited provisions explicitly for post-secondary students, however. Here2Talk is a service that was designed to give students access to a "free and confidential program that provides all students currently registered with a B.C. post-secondary school access to single-session 24/7 mental health support and community referral services via app, phone and web." ⁹ Here2Talk's development and launch was expedited at the onset of the pandemic in response to student advocates

calling attention to the significant effect the pandemic has had on the student mental health crisis.¹⁰ While the ABCS applauded this effort by the province and its recognition of the severity of the situation, Here2Talk does have undeniable drawbacks. Its utility to students experiencing mental health concerns is limited by the fact that it can only provide one-time, single-session support. Students seeking to build an ongoing relationship with a counselor to address issues that require long-term support cannot access the same counselor twice. Having to explain mental health concerns to a different counselor every time can be retraumatizing and exhausting, and it may discourage students from seeking help at all. As one testimony on FoundryBC's website states: "if I had a choice I wouldn't have to repeat my traumas multiple times to get the help I need."¹¹

Evidence from student surveys suggests that the capacity of institutional counselling services is not enough to meet student demand. These services frequently deal with capacity issues, with students reporting prohibitive wait times, especially during exam season and other particularly stressful parts of the term.¹² Institutional counselling departments may also lack counsellors trained to address the needs of underserved student communities, such as Indigenous students, 2SLGBTQQIA+ students, international students, or students with disabilities, whose needs may be different than those of the general population.¹³ Because of this, the ABCS has focused on advocacy that not only seeks to improve institutional capacity overall, but to provide dedicated supports to students from equity-seeking communities. These students frequently find that, due to a lack of trauma-informed, culturally competent staff resources, traditional counselling services are not accessible or effective. Students from equity-seeking communities can easily experience re-traumatization if they do not have access to staff who can properly address the varied contexts of their lived experiences.¹⁴

*student mental health is not
a standalone concern;*

**it is an
intersectional
experience
shaped
by each
student's
unique
identity**

and lived experiences

HOLISTIC, BASIC-NEEDS APPROACHES

We must acknowledge that while having access to professional mental health care is essential to promoting student wellbeing, it is not enough on its own to properly address the crisis students are facing. As acknowledged in primary literature regarding post-secondary mental health, including the Okanagan Charter¹⁵ and the Mental Health Commission of Canada's National Standard for Mental Health and Well-being for Post-secondary Students, student mental health is not a standalone concern; it is an intersectional experience shaped by each student's unique identity and lived experiences.¹⁶ Access to professional mental health services alone is not enough to meaningfully address the mental health impacts of the pandemic.

Reducing the direct and indirect barriers to post-secondary education and ensuring that students are able to pursue their educational goals without being forced to forgo basic needs, including secure access to food, medication, and housing, are essential elements of any strategy that would properly address the student mental health crisis. BC has made significant progress in improving its approach to mental health care in recent years, but there are still more challenges ahead of us. The ABCS will continue pushing for a comprehensive, inclusive, and accessible approach to mental health that gives all students in BC the support they need.

CANADIAN ALLIANCE OF STUDENT ASSOCIATIONS

Student Financial Aid During COVID-19

AUTHORS:

Samuel Titus

Jared Maltais



Representing over 265,000 students from 23 member institutions, the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA) has long been at the forefront of the federal conversation surrounding post-secondary education in Canada. Driven by the conviction that education ought to be accessible, affordable, innovative, and of the highest quality, CASA has advocated federally on behalf of students for over 25 years. Like so much else, COVID-19 has presented new and unique challenges along the pathways to success for students and recent graduates. As we transition into a second year of living with COVID-19, it is valuable to examine the progress that has been made and where the student movement can go from here.

Central to CASA's advocacy and policy work is the principle that any academically qualified student with the desire to pursue post-secondary education should be able to do so without facing undue barriers, including the collection of an unreasonable student debt load. The federal government has a long history of supporting post-secondary education through various student financial aid policies such as the Canadian Student Loan Program (CSLP) and Canada Student Grants (CSG). In 2018-2019, these two programs supported over 750,000 students across the country, or roughly one-third of all students.¹⁷ However, with COVID-19 and the dramatic changes it has brought, conversations surrounding the needs of post-secondary students have altered and grown, as has the role of the federal government in providing support.

In early March 2020, the first wave of lockdowns swept the country, leading many post-secondary students to fear for their job security, financial stability, and future prospects. Acting with applaudable quickness, on March 18 the Government of Canada made its first announcement on post-secondary related support.¹⁸ This was followed two weeks later with significant changes to the Canada Summer Jobs (CSJ) program.¹⁹

While these early announcements certainly helped to stem the tide, it soon became clear that the pandemic would last longer than a few weeks

and that a more robust and comprehensive package for students was needed. On April 22, the federal government responded to the historic and immediate needs of post-secondary students with a massive injection of funding in the form of a \$9 billion suite of new and expanded supports. This included the creation of the Canada Emergency Student Benefit (CESB) for those unemployed students not eligible for the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB), the doubling of all Canada Student Grants, and various changes to CSLP needs-assessments.²⁰ It also included aid specifically for graduate students, Indigenous learners, and those anxious over employment opportunities.²¹

Overall, these changes reflect many of CASA's pre-pandemic priorities regarding student financial aid, work opportunities, and consideration for equity-seeking groups. However, while this significant investment in students was welcome, many financial barriers remain for students amid the pandemic and beyond.

To begin, it is first worth re-emphasizing the significance and quantity of the funding. The \$9 billion price tag on the April 22 announcement represents an unprecedented level of spending on post-secondary students by the federal government.²² It also reflects that students often juggle competing financial interests by heavily investing in both direct and indirect financial aid. This corresponds with data commissioned by CASA in May 2020 which showed that two-thirds of students believed that COVID-19 would change their employment situation, and 70% expressed concern about future employment prospects due to the pandemic.²³ While it remains to be seen if the April 22 program changes helped assuage these fears, the 2020 Fall Economic Statement further recognized that students were among the hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, and provided additional support through the elimination of interest on federal student loans for 2021-2022.²⁴

While CASA supports many of these new initiatives, they are not without shortcomings: namely, most of the extensions and expansions were one-time only and do not embody a holistic shift in student support. In particular, a permanent doubling of CSG would represent a generational improvement in building access to post-secondary education in Canada.

The limited nature of these changes also does not reflect the multi-year realities posed by COVID-19. Even as vaccination numbers increase and the end moves into sight, the lasting impact of lockdowns, studying from home, and isolation will linger far beyond the “return to normal.” In data commissioned in May 2020, two-thirds of post-secondary student respondents reported that COVID-19 will impact their financial situation and job prospects beyond the 2020-2021 academic year.²⁵ Indeed, even those who relied on government loans to cover less than a quarter of their education costs have reported that they will be using more federal loans as a result of the pandemic, thus increasing student debt levels for years to come.²⁶

Perhaps most alarming, however, has been the exclusion of international students within the COVID-19 relief narrative. Despite accounting for nearly 16% of enrolment at both universities and colleges and 13% of total system income, international students have been left out of every single federal pandemic support.²⁷ Not only do international students pay significantly more in tuition fees, but many of the problems relating to job opportunities, isolation, and financing are exacerbated when placed in the international student context.²⁸

Both the federal government and post-secondary institutions have made international recruitment not only a priority, but essential in financing Canadian post-secondary education.²⁹ This dependence makes their absence a real misstep

in the federal government’s relief package. Indeed, domestic students have acknowledged this serious gap, with 85% reporting they believe that the federal government ought to do more for international students, and 73% believing that existing support ought to be extended to their international colleagues.³⁰ Furthermore, global competition for international students continues to accelerate, and those studying in Canada deserve support from a federal government that is interested in increasing immigration levels. Absent of necessary support, many incoming international students may choose to study and settle in alternative countries more appreciative of their value.

Across the board, whether regarding traditional financial assistance, job opportunities, or systemic inequalities, it is clear that COVID-19 will remain a relevant factor in Canadian post-secondary education for the foreseeable future. These problems reflect the urgent need to support students and recent graduates at this uniquely vulnerable point in their lives. While the current system is strong, students in Canada remain worried about both the present and the future. Accordingly, CASA has advocated for the following recommendations to help ease the anxieties faced by students:

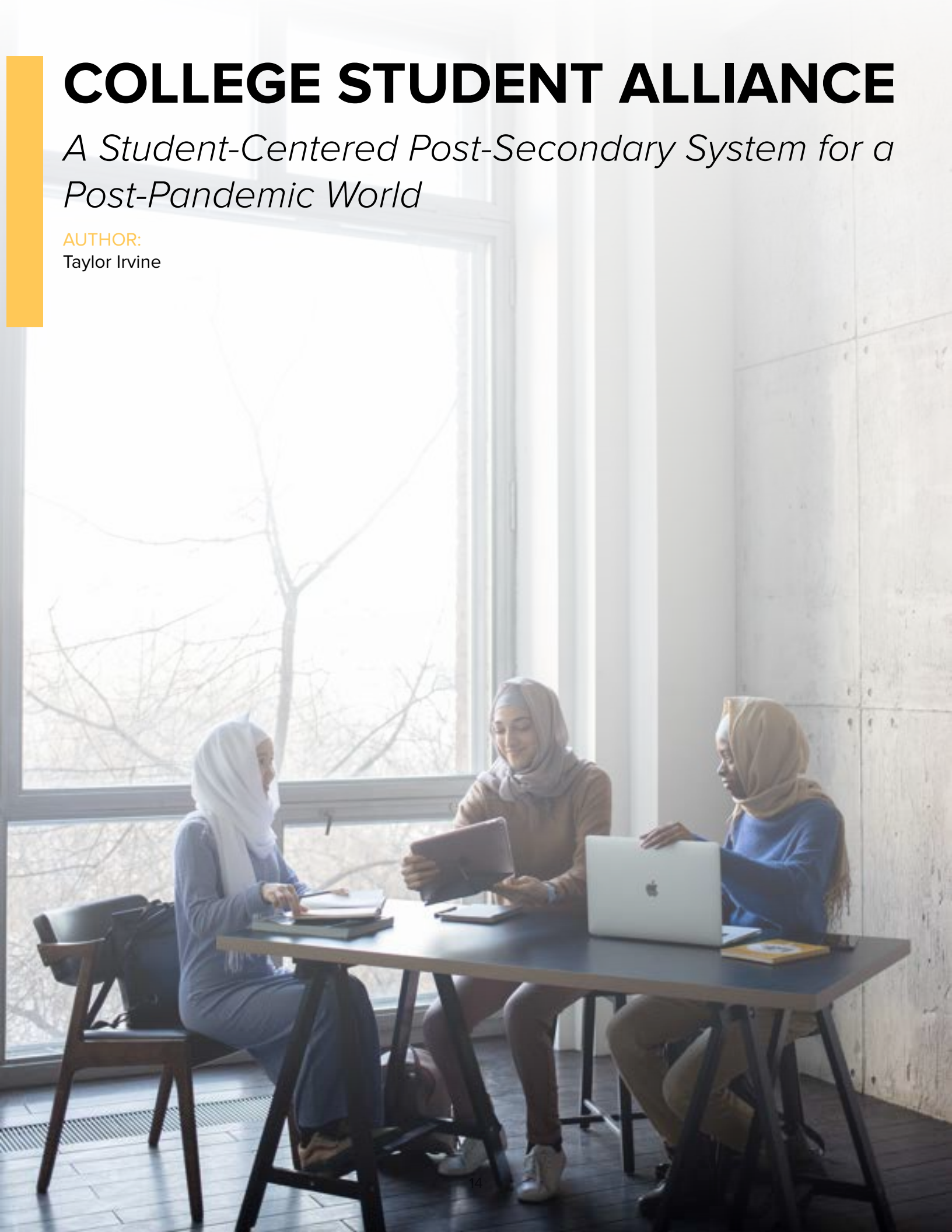
- 1 maintain the 2020-2021 funding levels to Canada Student Grants under the Canada Student Loans Program in response to COVID-19, thus doubling grant maximums for eligible students; and
- 2 ensure adequate support for all students studying in Canada. CASA believes that with these changes, the Canadian post-secondary sector will be able to emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic more accessible, affordable, innovative, and of a higher quality.

COLLEGE STUDENT ALLIANCE

A Student-Centered Post-Secondary System for a Post-Pandemic World

AUTHOR:

Taylor Irvine



Ontario has a high-quality post-secondary education (PSE) system that often acts as an equalizing force by providing social mobility and improved career prospects for individuals from all socioeconomic backgrounds. Colleges across the province are a major provider of equitable access to post-secondary education for underrepresented groups.³³ However, this year, the pandemic has created new barriers to education while exacerbating issues that have historically impeded access to education. With the majority of college programs now being facilitated in a virtual format, it has become exceptionally more difficult for students to benefit from the hands-on aspect of a college education. This is especially true for students in rural and remote communities with decreased access to the internet, those who need hands-on experience for their programs, and those with unique learning needs that are not adequately supported by a virtual format. As a sector, if we want to ensure that PSE remains the great equalizer, we need to rethink PSE in a post-pandemic world and ensure that it puts student needs first and is responsive to new and existing barriers.

IN-PERSON LEARNING

The college education system grew out of a demand for hands-on training for technical and experiential-based careers. In-person learning is integral to the college experience and cannot always be provided adequately through a virtual model. Virtual learning can work well in some cases—particularly for students who excel in self-directed learning and have adequate internet and technology, and in programs that were designed for a virtual format. However, virtual learning certainly does not work for all students and all programs.

The majority of college programs have some type of in-person learning component, especially for those enrolled in health care, community service, and trades programs.³¹ Having a sufficient number of hours of experience is imperative for students to graduate with the expertise they need to safely

and successfully participate in their careers. COVID-19 has caused workplaces to close and in-person learning to become more precarious, significantly limiting the availability of placement opportunities. In addition, because many students have deferred their studies, the limited availability of placements may continue after the pandemic and create increased competition among students for in-person learning opportunities.³² To address this issue, the province should prepare for the return to in-person learning by funding the creation of new placement and work-integrated learning opportunities. Not only would these opportunities help ensure that students graduate with the experience they need to embark on successful careers, they would foster increased connections between students and employers, ultimately promoting employment opportunities upon graduation.



INTERNET ACCESS

A predominant barrier to virtual learning is limited access to high-speed internet, which disproportionately affects students in Ontario's rural and remote regions and on First Nations reserves. Due to financial constraints, many college students in Ontario cannot afford to travel outside of their home region for school, and as a result, the majority choose to study within their home region.³⁴ Students in rural areas may rely on their school's internet connection due to decreased internet access and speeds in the area. While most households in Ontario (87%) have access to 50/10 Mbps internet, which is considered "basic telecom service" that all Canadians should have access to, only 29.5% of rural Ontario households have access to these basic internet speeds; that number drops to only 17% on the province's First Nations reserves.³⁵ Indigenous students make up 25% of the northern colleges' student population, and roughly 15% of college students live in rural communities, meaning that a significant portion of college students do not have access to an adequate internet connection.³⁶ An internet connection is not only essential for access to education, but for small businesses, community organizations, and the overall resiliency and sustainability of rural and remote economies.³⁷ In addition, while attending college virtually, many students have needed to share the internet or devices with family members or roommates, which can limit their ability to participate fully and excel in their courses. Over half of all Canadian households have less than one device per household member.³⁸ With many school-age children still learning at home, college students with dependents are struggling to take their own classes and support positive learning outcomes for their children while using an internet connection that is stretched thin.

The Government of Ontario has allocated nearly \$1 billion to expanding internet access in rural, remote, and underserved communities, which will undoubtedly have positive effects on the prosperity and livelihoods of these communities.³⁹ However, as we near the one-year anniversary of the first COVID-19 lockdown, internet access

in rural and remote areas of Ontario continues to be inadequate.⁴⁰ The barriers to education and employment presented by the pandemic have made having an internet connection an immediate necessity, and this will still be true after the pandemic. The province should immediately fast-track the expansion of cellular and broadband access in rural and remote regions in Ontario, and this should include a commitment to annual funding. Further, internet services in these regions should be subsidized to ensure affordability. The barriers to high-speed internet will not subside once the pandemic has concluded. In order to ensure that First Nations reserves and rural and remote areas are able to prosper in an increasingly online future, the government must prioritize long-term funding into internet connectivity for these communities. The government should also take steps to ensure their investments are meeting the needs of our students and that expanded internet service is affordable for the communities and families who need it.

VIRTUAL LEARNING EQUITY

Ontario's college student population has become increasingly diverse over the years, coming from a wide range of backgrounds, fields, and life stages. Each student has unique educational needs based on their learning style and program of study, which requires more than a "one size fits all" education. Moving forward, our post-secondary system should provide students with the option to receive their education either virtually or in person. The flexibility and convenience of virtual learning works well for some students, while for others, the lack of interaction with instructors and the difficulty associated with self-led learning causes virtual learning to be difficult at times. In a recent survey of CSA's membership, 40% of respondents indicated that they do not want virtual learning to continue after the pandemic, while 30% indicated that they do.

Of the remaining respondents, most indicated that they would only wish for virtual learning to continue if it is improved or if it is made optional.⁴¹ Virtual learning does work for some students, and it should be available to them if it supports their learning style. Overall, however, CSA's membership has expressed that for virtual learning to adequately meet the needs of students, there are much-needed improvements to be made.

In that regard, virtual learning should be student-centered and accommodate the specific learning needs of all students. This includes students with disabilities, who face added barriers to virtual learning and must often acquire a whole new suite of learning supports, which in some cases are not easily integrated with the variety of platforms used for virtual classes.⁴² There is a significant number of students who need added support for virtual learning, as students with disabilities make up 17% of the college student population.⁴³ The Government of Ontario has already invested \$50 million into a Digital Learning Strategy to modernize and expand the digital learning capacity at Ontario post-secondary institutions. CSA recommends that this Digital Learning Strategy integrate increased supports for students with disabilities, such as assistive technologies or Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Students with disabilities have expressed that they are more able to manage their disability symptoms when instructors embrace UDL principles.⁴⁴ The province should also take steps to ensure that students are met with not only responsive learning supports, but wrap-around supports as well, including mental health supports, Indigenous student supports, and adequate financial aid. Returning to in-person learning will be a hurdle for students, and they will need an abundance of support to help them focus on their learning journey and future careers.

In a recent survey of CSA's membership,

40% of respondents

indicated that they do not want virtual learning to continue after the pandemic.

CONCLUSION

The pandemic has changed the way students access the post-secondary system, with the majority of college programs now being delivered virtually. While virtual learning works well for some students, it may not be feasible for others. The delivery of a hands-on college experience has now become more precarious, and students' work placement opportunities have been jeopardized. Pre-existing deficiencies in high-speed internet have worsened the effects of the pandemic on students and communities on First Nations reserves and rural and remote areas. In addition, accommodating each student's unique learning needs requires more than a "one size fits all" learning approach, and students should have the option to take virtual or in-person classes after the pandemic. A student-centered digital learning strategy accompanied by an abundance of wrap-around supports will help students succeed in their learning journey, ultimately allowing them to embark on successful careers that will help rebuild a better future for Ontario. As a sector and as a province, we need to work together to rebuild a post-secondary system that is accessible, equitable, and student-centered.



COUNCIL OF ALBERTA UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

*How Online Education Design and Funding
Greatly Impact Quality*

AUTHOR:
John Mastel



For over half a century, Alberta post-secondary institutions have delivered high-quality distance education opportunities. These courses and programs have been specifically designed for distance delivery, and students have indicated satisfaction with the quality of instruction as well as the overall quality. When Alberta's post-secondary institutions had to quickly alter the delivery of courses and programs due to the outbreak of COVID-19, institutions and professors had little time to adapt in-person lectures and classes to an online format. This sudden change has highlighted a number of issues that online or distance education can bring when the course or program was not originally intended to be delivered via that format. Alberta's undergraduate students have indicated concerns with the quality of instruction, with assignments and proctoring requirements, and with the lack of support offered by digital education. The Council of Alberta University Students (CAUS) believes that these concerns can be addressed through proper support from the province's universities, as well as through funds provided by the Government of Alberta.

When universities abruptly suspended in-person classes in the Spring of 2020, courses had to shift to an online format within a matter of days. This left professors and departments scrambling to produce online content and determine how students would be assessed. Unfortunately, the amount of support provided by institutions often

did not allow professors to provide their students with high-quality instruction and feedback. Online learning is not as simple as putting a camcorder at the back of the classroom and recording a lecture. The pedagogical techniques required to teach effectively online differ from that of in-person education, simply due to the physical disconnect between the instructor and student. At home, students can be easily distracted by family members, roommates, or pets. While students can work around this by establishing a conducive study and work area, it is also important for professors to ensure that their lecture content is diverse enough to cater to students' various learning styles (and not solely to audio learners). Further, providing feedback during a lesson can become more difficult, since asking clarifying questions is no longer as easy as raising your hand. From the onset of the pandemic, institutions should have been provided with funding supports to allow them to respond to the needs of students and support them through high-quality online course delivery.

In addition to online lessons, coursework and exams must also be re-evaluated when delivered through distance education. This could mean adding frequent, smaller assignments to help indicate how well the class is retaining and applying the information and techniques provided by the professor, who could then use this feedback to adjust their course delivery to reinforce certain aspects of the material.

Additionally, the requirement to use proctoring software while writing an exam has proven to be extremely problematic. Many of these services require the students to sit in front of their computer recording themselves with a webcam and microphone, and students may be flagged for cheating if they look away for too long. Having people in the background moving or even being picked up on the microphone could result in a similar flag as well. In some cases, aspects of facial recognition are also used. Some evidence has been raised that these systems fail to accurately identify faces of students with darker complexions, potentially resulting in a disproportionate number of racialized students being flagged for academic misconduct.⁴⁵ All students see this as very concerning and have pushed institutions to disallow use of this type of software. Exams are just one of many ways to assess whether students have gained the required knowledge and skills from attending a class. Since the vast majority of current classes were not originally designed to be taught online, professors have faced the difficult task of adapting content and assessment methods, often without the support they need from their universities.

Many students have commented that they feel increasingly stressed as a result of online course delivery and the pandemic more broadly. With much of the economy being closed just prior to the Summer of 2020, many post-secondary students were not able to find employment to help support their academic studies. The Government of Canada did provide income support for Canadians; however, due to some of the requirements for these programs, many students were not able to receive assistance if they had not been working during the academic year. Further, social distancing has had the effect of separating social circles and diminishing the emotional support they provide. If a student is experiencing difficulties with their course work, they are far less able to lean on their friends and classmates

for support. Online distance education can also make students feel more anonymous and less connected, which further distances classmates from one another. While some students have been living at home, family members may not be able to fully appreciate what students are encountering—at least not to the same extent as a classmate or friend experiencing similar circumstances. Some Alberta campuses have reported a decrease in the use of mental health services on campus, and CAUS firmly believes that this is due to students either not knowing about these services or not knowing how to access them remotely during the pandemic. Post-secondaries should reassess their outreach methods and increase their advertisements for these and other campus services to ensure students are aware of their availability.

The sudden shift to distance education has highlighted a number of issues and concerns to Alberta's undergraduate population. Courses must be tailored for online delivery and cannot simply be a reapplication of in-class assignments. Professors developing online courses or transitioning in-person classes to an online format need funding and support to ensure that the quality of education is not diminished. Proctoring software has proven to be extremely problematic in its current form, with students being needlessly flagged for cheating if they look away, have their phone ring, or have a darker skin colour. Post-secondary institutions must also take into account how students' mental health can be impacted through sudden changes like a global pandemic and work to adapt their services accordingly. Looking ahead, the COVID-19 pandemic has created an interesting opportunity to review and assess how best to deliver online course content. The potential to apply newly developed best practices for distance education could greatly increase the accessibility and affordability of post-secondary education in Alberta.

*Alberta campuses have reported a **decrease** in the use of mental health services on campus, and CAUS firmly believes that this is due to students either not knowing about these services or not knowing how to access them remotely during the pandemic.*

MANITOBA ALLIANCE OF POST-SECONDARY STUDENTS

*Access Programs in Manitoba: Addressing
COVID-19's Impact on Marginalized Communities*

AUTHORS:

Kristin Smith
Jelynn Dela Cruz
Silvia Sekander
Yash Chopra
Melissa Ghidoni



INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has offered a harsh lesson in how health outcomes are intimately tied to income and other socioeconomic determinants, with those from marginalized communities most negatively affected. The same has long been true of post-secondary learning outcomes. During COVID-19, we have seen reduced participation in post-secondary education by individuals from low-income families, who continue to experience income erosion, and this new trend could set back efforts to reduce inequality by decades.

Such a situation carries the risk of reversing incremental progress on eliminating child poverty, of which Manitoba has the highest rate in Canada.⁴⁶ Aggravated inequality in the wake of the pandemic would also compound the existing challenges faced by Indigenous learners, many of whom—because of poverty, intergenerational trauma, and geographical displacement—are the first in their family to pursue post-secondary studies.

The Canada-wide need to close the gap in post-secondary education outcomes between Indigenous learners and non-Indigenous learners is particularly evident in Manitoba, where Indigenous peoples are the fastest growing demographic and represent nearly one-fifth of the population—the largest proportion in Canada.⁴⁷ This has been emphasized in numerous publications over the years, including the Government of Manitoba's new Skills, Knowledge and Talent strategy, released in February 2021.⁴⁸ Similarly, the 2020 Horizon Manitoba report, a collaboration between the Business Council of Manitoba and the province's post-secondary institutions, discusses how to better align education with the needs of the economy and labour market.⁴⁹

With all of this in mind, the Manitoba Alliance of Post-Secondary Students (MAPSS) has made enhancing supports for Indigenous students and other disadvantaged learners a priority in its meetings with government and opposition parties. This began with MAPSS's inaugural lobby week in October 2020, where student leaders

advocated for bolstering Manitoba's Access programs.

INCREASING POST-SECONDARY 'ACCESS' FOR THOSE WHO NEED IT MOST

Established in the early 1970s, Manitoba's Access programs assist Indigenous, northern, and low-income residents of the province to better access post-secondary education through a unique package of tailored academic, financial, and social supports. Together, they holistically address the unique challenges faced by learners from these communities.

Access programs help students find childcare and housing, in addition to offering smaller class sizes, personal development counselling, financial literacy support, connections to Indigenous knowledge keepers, and more. They are currently offered at the University of Manitoba, the University of Winnipeg, Red River College, and the University College of the North, with programs available in fields ranging from nursing, education, and dentistry, to pharmacy, advanced manufacturing, and business administration.

Some 80% of Access participants are Indigenous students, with past participants noting how the support provided by these programs is fundamental to helping facilitate the transition from high school to post-secondary education—especially when doing so comes with the culture shock of leaving small First Nations communities to study in Winnipeg, the province's largest urban centre, with over 750,000 people.⁵⁰

However, in 2018/2019, Access funding was reduced by the province's Progressive Conservative government, with that money being diverted into Manitoba's general scholarship and bursary scheme. An additional \$1.6 million in bursaries for hundreds of students to assist with cost of living was also dropped. Overall funding for the program has been stagnant ever since, and the bursaries have never been reinstated.

FIGURE 1: LIKELIHOOD OF EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT BY PARENTAL EDUCATION BACKGROUND, OECD AVERAGE

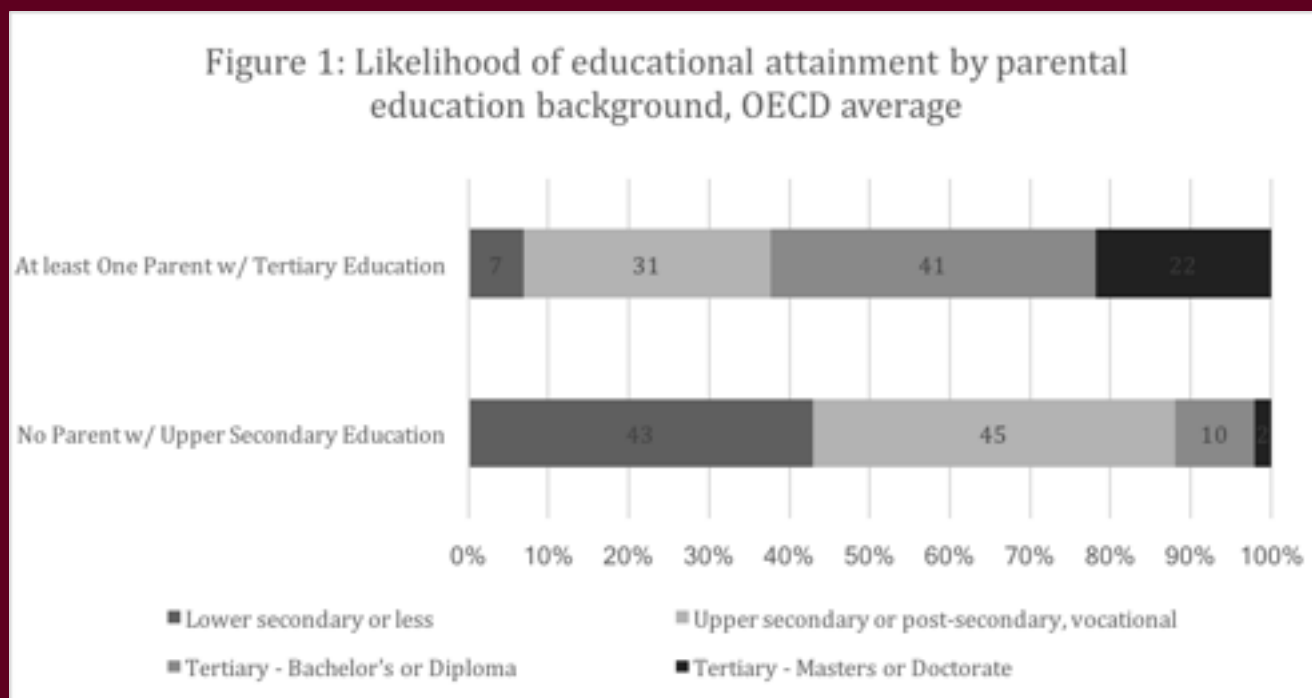


Figure 1: Parents' educational outcomes have a profound effect on their children's educational outcomes, making this a key factor in reducing inequality and breaking cycles of child poverty.

MAPSS has raised this issue in meetings with multiple government ministers, asking the province to reinstate participant bursaries and expand Access programs by 50%, which would create spots for hundreds of new participants. MAPSS has also recommended increasing outreach efforts in First Nations high schools, which would increase awareness and help Indigenous students navigate an otherwise daunting process. These initiatives would benefit Manitoba as a whole; after all, failing to address inequality not only threatens the wellbeing of individuals and communities, it also drags down the province's economic performance.

Currently, Indigenous unemployment rates across all age brackets in Manitoba are two-to-three times higher than non-Indigenous unemployment rates. This is particularly noticeable among males—17% for Indigenous males versus 6% for non-Indigenous males.⁵¹ Closing post-secondary education access gaps so that Indigenous employment rates are on par with overall provincial rates could mean \$957 million in additional yearly earnings for over 22,500 newly

employable First Nations people, and an extra \$2.8 billion in GDP for the province annually due to increased productivity.⁵²

Even more important, providing Indigenous learners with barrier-free access to post-secondary education is a crucial step in furthering reconciliation with Indigenous communities. On December 18, 2015, Manitoba's six universities, three colleges, and the Manitoba School Boards Association signed the Manitoba Collaborative Indigenous Education Blueprint in order to, among other goals, "...increase access to education for all Indigenous learners from recruitment to retention"⁵³—outcomes which Access programs accomplish particularly well.

Another benefit of Access programs is how they act as an organic investment in the social development of communities from which students originate. Since 1985, 716 inner city students have graduated as social workers through Access programs and gone on to work in provincial, municipal, and community health and social services.⁵⁴

As numerous reports have emerged on how issues of domestic violence, addiction, and mental health have been exacerbated by the pandemic, a new generation of community health and social workers will be needed to help mitigate the underlying social damage brought on by job losses, social isolation, and general uncertainty—particularly within marginalized communities, who were already dealing with a host of other challenges.

CONCLUSION

Access program graduates serve as a reminder that a relatively low-cost social assistance program can indeed deliver significant return on investment down the line, helping people living on the margins transform themselves into members of the workforce who take pride in serving their communities.

There is perhaps no better example of the power of Access programs than Manitoba's current Leader of the Opposition, Wab Kinew, who has said that he would not be where he is today if his mother, Dr. Kathi Avery, had not been granted a spot in an Access program when she was younger.

For all the disruption caused by the pandemic, it has also provided clarity on the risks inherent in returning to a status quo that leaves social and economic inequality to fester. As governments seek to “build back better,” it is important that those most in need are not left behind. For Indigenous and disadvantaged learners in Manitoba, and indeed all across Canada, Access programs represent an established model for how to increase access to post-secondary education and promote reconciliation with Indigenous peoples—both of which will, in turn, benefit us all.



NEW BRUNSWICK STUDENT ALLIANCE

New Brunswick Post-Secondary Students' Story of COVID-19

AUTHOR:

Bibi Wasiimah Joomun



LETTER FROM THE CHAIR & VICE-CHAIR

This has been the most unprecedented year in our history as a province and so many have been impacted as a result of the pandemic, including thousands of students in New Brunswick. By investing in students, we will be investing in the future of our province and investing in the ideas and solutions that will redesign New Brunswick and prepare it for whatever may lie ahead. This document outlines some of the current needs and challenges facing our students, as well as how support from our government will have lasting impacts on the future of the province.

Students and our post-secondary institutions are currently adapting to a new way of learning, teaching, researching, and working. Challenges continue to present themselves and many are feeling isolated and disconnected. We've heard from so many students who are considering not returning to university or are returning home to look for better opportunities elsewhere.

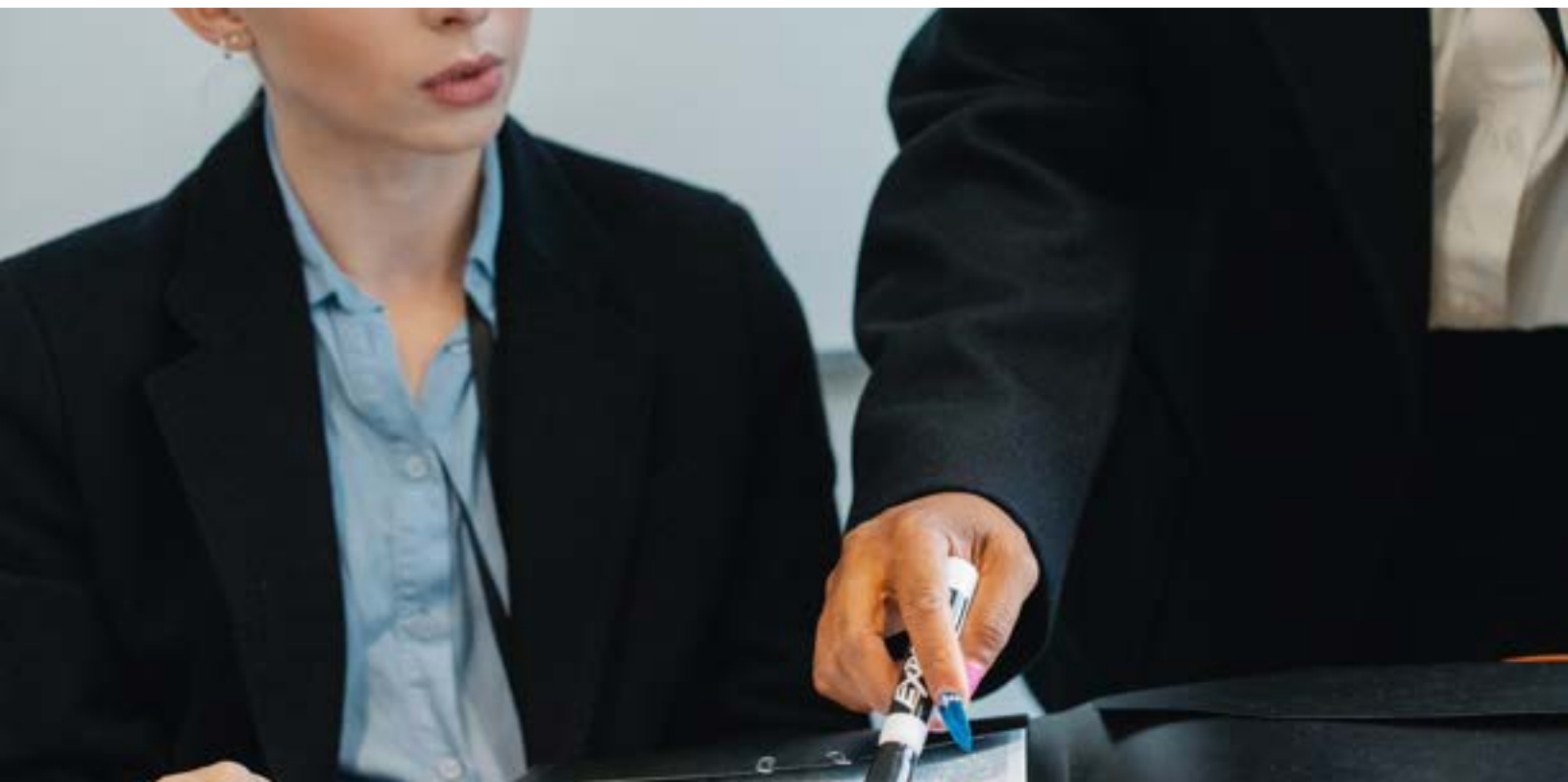
In order to best support the future of New Brunswick and continually allow a cohort of greatly educated, skilled, and diverse young adults to maximize their education and apply their talents to the province, we implore you to strongly consider the recommendations brought forward by the New Brunswick Student Alliance (NBSA) after thorough consultation with our students. Addressing these challenges is integral to improving the post-secondary education experience in New Brunswick.

Patrick Hickey

*President of the University of New Brunswick Students' Representative Council
Chair of the New Brunswick Student Alliance*

Sarah Kohut

*President of the St. Thomas University Students' Union
Vice-Chair of the New Brunswick Student Alliance*



INTRODUCTION

On March 13, 2020, the Government of New Brunswick shut down the province following one case of COVID-19 in order to monitor and avoid the spread of the virus. Post-secondary institutions were asked to close down, effective immediately. Students either decided to head home, which in some cases meant moving to another part of the province or outside the province, or to stay where they were due to restrictions such as not having enough money to travel home or being from a country where the spread of COVID-19 was worse than in New Brunswick.

What we thought was just going to be a few months of online learning ended up being our “new normal.” Remote learning became the delivery method for most courses during the 2020-2021 academic year at most if not all of the province’s post-secondary institutions. Accessible, high-quality education and financial aid have become more prevalent issues than they were pre-COVID-19, and the New Brunswick Student Alliance (NBSA) has been advocating to our government and our member institutions to break the barriers that our post-secondary students have been facing during this pandemic.

ACCESSIBLE EDUCATION

When university courses moved online, there was an unspoken assumption that all post-secondary students already had access to a computer, a stable internet connection, and other materials needed to study from home. However, in 2020, 44% of Canadians spent more on online technology due to working from home.⁵⁵ According to an NBSA survey conducted in August 2020, 63% of post-secondary students enrolled full-time in a New Brunswick post-secondary institution had experienced issues with their internet connection and/or with technological devices during the Fall 2020 semester. Online learning, which we thought would promote accessible education for our students, ended up adding another barrier to obtaining a post-secondary education in New Brunswick.

As noted by federal Intergovernmental Affairs Minister, Dominic Leblanc, “now more than ever—and COVID-19 has certainly made this clear—residents in rural areas need reliable broadband high-speed internet service to access educational resources...”⁵⁶ In November 2020, a joint project from the federal and provincial governments was announced in which 73,000 New Brunswick households would be given access to high-speed internet.⁵⁷ While the NBSA applauds the government’s plan to bring faster internet speeds to rural New Brunswick over the next four years, action needs to be taken now as well. Our students are paying the same fees to attend post-secondary institutions during a pandemic, and in some cases have not been able to fully participate due to poor internet service.

Students have also identified a lack of access to technological devices as a prevalent issue now that they are unable to use on-campus computer laboratories. Students are still expected to pay the same fees for a university degree, despite not being able to fully benefit from an education if they do not have access to a reliable technological device and a stable internet connection. Promoting access to technology and internet access is a long-term investment that will continue to benefit our students after COVID-19.

Additionally, the pandemic has reinforced the value of Open Educational Resources (OERs). OERs are free-to-use, openly licensed teaching and learning materials that offer increased flexibility, customization, and cost-saving potential for students.⁵⁸ Canadians typically pay between \$800 to \$1,000 per year on textbooks.⁵⁹ Despite the fact that not having textbooks often results in academic penalty, 54% of British Columbia students reported choosing not to buy their textbooks due to high costs, 30% of which reported that their grades suffered as a result.⁶⁰

Financial aid gives students of lower-income status the opportunity to gain the skills they need to achieve economic growth within New Brunswick and to succeed in their future without worry of financial strain.

The NBSA, alongside Students Nova Scotia and the University of Prince Edward Island Student Union, have been working with the Council of Atlantic University Libraries—Conseil des bibliothèques universitaires de l'Atlantique's (CAUL-CBUA) AtlanticOER pilot program, aimed at helping educators create, adapt, and adopt OERs; the program was officially launched in February 2021. Now we are asking that the provincial government invest in creating New Brunswick-based OERs hosted through AtlanticOER, with funds being matched by post-secondary institutions to ensure sustainable funding for the project post-COVID-19.

FINANCIAL AID

The NBSA has long taken a stance when it comes to discussing the real cost of post-secondary education in the province. Since the early 2000s, we have advocated on the importance of sustainable government funding to ensure reasonable tuition rates that enable students to effectively manage the financial burden of attending post-secondary education. For the last two decades, our organization has seen students financially and emotionally drained due to the province not taking steps towards having an affordable, predictable, and sustainable post-secondary system. New Brunswick's financial

aid system has been unpredictable, largely due to the political climate of the province. We have seen six governments, switching from Liberals to Progressive Conservatives, and each administration has added or removed programs that were implemented by the previous government.

Student financial aid makes post-secondary education more accessible to everyone, especially during the pandemic. Financial aid gives students of lower-income status the opportunity to gain the skills they need to achieve economic growth within New Brunswick and to succeed in their future without worry of financial strain. The average New Brunswick post-secondary student graduates with \$40,000 in debt, which is 36.7% higher than the national average of \$28,000. In 2018, 65% of students were worried about their debt, and in 2017, nearly 77% of Canadians under 40 reported that they regretted taking on debt to pay for their education.⁶¹ It takes roughly seven years to pay off student debt, making it an issue that burdens graduates during the formative years of their careers. The pandemic has given way to additional financial barriers. Not only have students lost their employment, they are also expected to pay the same university fees—if not more—than what they used to pay pre-COVID-19.

International students also face several barriers when it comes to accessing post-secondary education in New Brunswick, including the high cost of international student tuition. Since their tuition is unregulated by the government and based solely on each university's discretion, it is often much higher than domestic student tuition. In the 2018-19 academic year, international students in the Maritimes paid an average of 108% more than domestic students.⁶² In order for international students to be more inclined to study and stay in New Brunswick, a decrease or cap on international student tuition needs to be put in place. Without these students, the province's economy greatly suffers. According to a report done by the New Brunswick Multicultural Council, international students contribute enormously to the GDP of New Brunswick. The estimated 900 international students in New Brunswick in 2018 directly contributed \$75,811,502 to the GDP.⁶³

The NBSA advocates for making post-secondary education accessible for everyone. In this year's advocacy document, [Breaking Barriers to Postsecondary Education](#), we prioritized investing in students during the pandemic to allow for a holistic education and to facilitate post-COVID-19 recovery. Investing in post-secondary students affects the lives of individuals who are trying to

invest in a better future, and who believe New Brunswick's post-secondary system can help them achieve their goals. Students, domestic and international, desperately need relief from the financial strain of pursuing a post-secondary education in New Brunswick. This will help them invest in our province, whether it's supporting local businesses, purchasing a home, staying in the province for work, or starting a family post-COVID-19.

CONCLUSION

The New Brunswick Student Alliance firmly believes in creating a post-secondary education system where any qualified student can attain a high-quality education while enjoying an exceptional quality of life. With the pandemic, it is imperative that we show our students that we are there for them and provide them with assistance during their studies. We need to be thinking about how any investment made in the post-secondary education system during the pandemic is going to have a long-lasting impact on our education system in the province. Post-secondary education has taken multiple hits and setbacks with COVID-19, but the pandemic has also highlighted how we can better support our students as the province begins its recovery.



ONTARIO UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT ALLIANCE

*Supporting Students Through High-Quality,
Affordable Online Education*

AUTHOR:

Hope Tuff-Berg



In March of 2020, COVID-19 changed post-secondary education almost overnight. Ontario's universities were forced to move to online learning without any time to envision or prepare a model that would best meet students' needs and provide them with an educational experience that matched what they were used to on campus. The loss of thousands of student jobs led to feelings of anxiety and uncertainty, inhibiting students' ability to focus on their studies and exacerbating existing affordability concerns brought on by recent changes to the Ontario Student Assistance Plan (OSAP). While the provincial government did take action by implementing a six-month moratorium on OSAP loan and interest payments, this initiative ended in September of 2020, despite the fact that students still need help. Through targeted supports, the Government of Ontario can ensure that students in the province have access to high-quality, affordable post-secondary education during and after the pandemic.

Over the past year, students have expressed concerns about the quality of online education and remote learning. The Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance (OUSA) ran a Quality of Education Campaign in the Fall of 2020 that collected feedback from students who had taken online courses during the pandemic. Many raised serious concerns about security issues involved with third-party proctoring software and testing practices; for example, students whose online courses required them to take closed-book exams were expected to download software to watch them through their cameras, track their mouse movement, and access documents and files stored on their computer. The anxiety of test-taking has also been heightened by concerns over Wi-Fi strength, being able to find a quiet space to focus, and other requirements set out by professors.

To address these concerns, OUSA recommends that the provincial government expand existing regulations and implement guidelines to

address the privacy and security concerns of proctoring, other online assessment tools that require students to provide access to computer functions, and any institution-specific assessment processes. This would help promote consistent, high-quality assessments, as well as secure data collection in terms of its storage, access, retention, and use. Moreover, the Ontario government should provide institutions with funding to cover the training and staffing costs of implementing alternative forms of learning assessments that do not use proctoring and other online assessment tools.

Due to the likelihood of virtual and hybrid learning models continuing into the near future, having access to high-speed internet will be necessary for students across Ontario. OUSA recommends that the provincial government work with the

Due to the likelihood of virtual and hybrid learning models continuing into the near future, having access to high-speed internet will be necessary for students across Ontario.

federal government to ensure students—especially those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds or rural and northern settings—are appropriately prioritized in the government's broadband internet investment.

Beyond testing requirements and internet issues, students have indicated that the online learning model is undoubtedly less engaging than in-class learning. In particular, students have experienced increased workloads with frequent smaller assignments to make up for in-person assessments, as well as lectures with missing information and a lack of hands-on learning opportunities—all of which indicates the degree to which many professors felt unprepared to deliver their courses in a virtual environment. Students also voiced a lack of support from some professors while adapting to this new learning method, with OUSA's Quality of Education Campaign highlighting concerns about professors who were less than understanding when students had technical difficulties or couldn't access the required technology.



To ensure that institutions are able to provide high-quality virtual and hybrid course delivery moving forward, OUSA asks that the province match institutional funding towards online learning and remote delivery. Further, the provincial government should task the Ontario University Council on Quality Assurance with expanding the Institutional Quality Assurance Process requirements to include program delivery criteria for online courses and include an assessment of online learning in its Final Assessment Report.

Like many Canadians, students have expressed that social isolation and financial pressures have been some of the most troubling obstacles to overcome during the pandemic. The lack of interaction between professors, students, and peers has had undeniable implications for students' mental health and sense of belonging at their universities. In addition to the costs of paying for third-party software and other online learning requirements, students have had to contend with missing out on the job opportunities they would usually rely on to cover rent, tuition, textbooks, and other educational expenses. Moreover, despite the fact that COVID-19 has led

to income disruptions for students, spouses, and families, OSAP calculations continue to factor in expected contributions from these sources. All of this increases financial anxiety among students and prevents them from focusing on excelling in their studies, completing their degrees on time, and contributing to Ontario's economic recovery as soon as possible.

There are several measures the province can take to address the financial hardships students have faced during their transition to online learning. OUSA recommends that the government prevent institutions from downloading costs associated with online course delivery onto students through additional course fees, which have appeared in the form of mandatory third-party software. The province should also expand access to the Canada Student Grant for Services and Equipment for Students with Permanent Disabilities, including waiving the requirement that students must have already applied for OSAP to be eligible. Further, to ensure that students facing additional barriers to receiving online education are not left behind, the government should create a strategy to promote this grant and reduce funding wait times.

The provincial government also has a broader opportunity to support students and recent graduates who have struggled financially during COVID-19. In light of the income disruptions many have experienced, OUSA asks that the province eliminate expected contributions from students, spouses, and parents from OSAP calculations. The province should also reinstate the moratorium on OSAP payments and interest accrual until September 2022, following which it should introduce a permanent, two-year OSAP grace period after graduation to ensure new graduates are able to manage their debt loads.

Despite the sudden challenges posed by COVID-19 over the past year, students have persevered and sought new opportunities to thrive in an online learning environment. As Ontario continues to respond to COVID-19, we need action and cooperation from all stakeholders to ensure that all students can afford to access high-quality online post-secondary education. We are confident that responding to student concerns around financial aid and quality of education will result in a much more meaningful, accessible, and impactful learning experience for all students in the province. We urge the provincial government to continue engaging with students on these issues as we begin the slow recovery from COVID-19's impact on Ontario.

*...responding to
student concerns
around financial
aid and quality
of education will
result in a much
more meaningful,
accessible,
and impactful
learning
experience for
all students in the
province.*

STUDENTS NOVA SCOTIA

Supporting Nova Scotia in Our COVID-19 Recovery

AUTHORS:

Clancy McDaniel, Nick Mason

EDITORS:

Lydia Houck, Samantha Graham



INTRODUCTION: CONTEXTUALIZING POST-SECONDARY PRE-COVID-19 AND DURING THE PANDEMIC

Much of the discourse related to economic recovery and COVID-19 has been about how the pandemic has exacerbated pre-existing inequities, and the postsecondary sector is no different. Even prior to COVID-19, Nova Scotia was the only Maritime province facing a constant decline of provincial post-secondary participation, with only 20.3%—close to 1 in 5—of university-aged residents enrolled in 2018-2019.⁶⁴

In our provincial context, Indigenous communities are the fastest growing in Nova Scotia, while 43% of Nova Scotians live in rural areas.⁶⁵ The participation gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth in Canada is 24.3%.⁶⁶ The gap for first-generation and non-first-generation youth in PSE is 19.8%, and the gap for rural and urban youth is 10%.⁶⁷

Finances also continue to play a large role in educational attainment. Nova Scotia has the highest rate of child poverty in the Atlantic provinces, with an average of 1 in 4.⁶⁸ Nova Scotia also has the second lowest nationwide median income for the 24-54 age bracket.⁶⁹ Further, 17% of Nova Scotia Student Assistance applicants face unmet need (meaning they receive maximum assistance which does not cover their calculated need).⁷⁰ This number is not reflective of the 4/5^{ths} of university-aged Nova Scotians who are not enrolled, likely due to the factors above.

In the context of COVID-19, rural students—who are already less likely to attend university—were forced to move and take on related costs due to poor internet quality. Students across the board were unable to secure work placements and summer jobs, impacting their ability to gain

labour force attachment or support themselves financially. Students facing unmet needs continue to receive provincial funding levels that have not been adjusted in four years, despite province-wide poverty rates and stagnant wages.

Nova Scotian institutions also faced unique, COVID-19-specific challenges, as multiple campuses adopted hybrid or fully in-person models of delivery. At Students Nova Scotia, this immediately raised concerns about safety and equity. Would students be tested for COVID-19? What about international students who did not have healthcare? Would students who are immunocompromised be accommodated?

We also know that COVID-19's impacts on the economy will not be limited to the past 12 months. A skilled workforce—one which we are able to retain post-graduation—will be key to our economic recovery. Post-secondary education is both a financial and social capital builder, which is evident in Nova Scotia statistics. Prior to COVID-19, the unemployment rate for high school diploma earners in Nova Scotia was 8.8%, compared to 5.8% for those holding a college degree or diploma and 4.0% for those holding a bachelor's degree, respectively.⁷¹ The earnings advantage of holding a bachelor's degree in Nova Scotia is also significant, resulting in a 50.7% increase for men and a 70.0% increase for women.

As a result, much of Students Nova Scotia's advocacy in 2020-2021 has focused on two areas: direct COVID-19 related support, and future involvement of students and new graduates in Nova Scotia's post-pandemic economic recovery.





DIRECT COVID-19 RELATED SUPPORTS

When several Nova Scotia universities announced plans for in-person course delivery, Students Nova Scotia mobilized an effort to ensure all students had access to COVID-19 testing and affordable, safe places to undertake our province's mandatory 14-day quarantine period. Knowing that the province welcomes thousands of out of province students per year, our organization was concerned that institutions were putting their bottom line before student safety. Without a robust testing protocol, a COVID-19 outbreak could not only decimate our small, residential campuses, but also the small, elderly communities they are located in.

StudentsNS met with Chief Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Robert Strang, to present our solutions, including mandatory and free COVID-19 testing for all non-Atlantic Bubble students. Dr. Strang and former Premier Stephen McNeil announced this policy in August 2020. Campus test sites administered 9,000 tests, with hundreds of volunteers being students themselves, shattering the notion of youth apathy towards community safety.⁷²

A similar conversation was held in November 2020, when discussing students returning for the holiday break. Students Nova Scotia argued that once again, a student-focused testing strategy was necessary to keep students and community

members safe. This sentiment was shared across political lines, and a protocol was put in place to encourage students to get tested as a part of their quarantine.

Once classes began, further inequities emerged, including access to high-speed internet. Despite recent announcements from both the federal and provincial governments to expand rural internet access, conservative estimates have these expansions coming into fruition in 2023. In the meantime, students studying online have either had to pay for costly technology upgrades, commute to a central location for class or assignment uploads, or move entirely. Halifax—home to 5 out of 10 of Nova Scotia's universities—is facing a widespread housing shortage, with less than a 1% vacancy rate. For students who had to move because they could not log into their lectures, this meant paying an average rent of \$1,300/month for a one-bedroom apartment.⁷³

Students Nova Scotia brought these concerns to the Government of Nova Scotia in November 2020, which resulted in the creation of the COVID-19 Response Grant. This grant, paid to all Nova Scotia Student Assistance borrowers, provided \$750 to recognize the increased costs students have faced.⁷⁴ Students Nova Scotia welcomed the move and hopes to see more long-term investments into Student Assistance in the upcoming Provincial Budget.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE: STUDENTS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

In any year, post-secondary attainment has positive impacts on both individuals and the economy, especially in a province such as Nova Scotia. Our province also benefits from the attraction and retention of youth, a demographic that has traditionally seen mass out-migration, impacting our economic growth. These sentiments will still ring true after COVID-19, as we anticipate that many will be forced to train or re-skill to meet the demands of a post-COVID-19 market.

Students Nova Scotia has always been a proponent of investing in work-integrated learning (WIL). WIL is known to not only provide relevant, hands-on experience, but it also creates a link between local employers and graduates, aiding in retention. The Government of Nova Scotia funds several initiatives to support this growth, including the Co-operative Education Incentive, Graduate to Opportunity, and Innovate to Opportunity. Continued investment will be crucial to ensure that labour force attachment is direct and intentional.

Our organization has also called on the provincial government to assist those in need by increasing the weekly maximum loan and grant amounts to address unmet need. There have been no concrete investments into Student Assistance since 2017, despite changes in the Consumer Price Index and an increase in tuition of roughly 9%.⁷⁵ As students continue to face high unemployment, the Government of Nova Scotia needs to mobilize resources so that equity-seeking groups are not left out in the transition to a post-COVID-19 economy simply because they could not afford to go (back) to school.

CONCLUSION

Like most jurisdictions, Nova Scotia has had to contend with meeting the immediate needs of its population while planning for post-COVID-19 stability. Students have the ability to contribute positively on both ends. Investing in students' ability to earn credentials and skills will not only increase their chances of earning a stable income, it will help the province stabilize overall.

*As students continue to face high unemployment, the Government of Nova Scotia needs to **mobilize resources** so that equity-seeking groups **are not left out** in the transition to a post-COVID-19 economy simply because they could not afford to go (back) to school.*

UNIVERSITY OF PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND STUDENT UNION

The Imminent Housing Crisis in Prince Edward Island and the Role of COVID-19

AUTHOR:

Malak Nassar



Prince Edward Island (PEI) is home to one of Canada's fastest growing populations; however, there have not been housing solutions to reflect that growth, leaving PEI in an imminent housing crisis.⁷⁶ This has been a huge concern for Charlottetown residents, and in particular for one of the city's ever-growing demographics: students. COVID-19 has reshaped the housing crisis in PEI by changing both the supply and demand of housing on the market, and solutions are still far from being realized.

Prior to COVID-19, short-term rentals contributed to the housing crisis by catering to the tourism industry, which depleted the housing market.⁷⁷ Vacancy rates in Charlottetown during that time were at an all-time low, reaching 0.2% in 2018.⁷⁸ However, when COVID-19 hit the tourism industry, short-term rental owners had to gear their units toward the long-term tenant and student markets. This alleviated the issue, but only slightly; in 2020, the vacancy rate in Charlottetown went up to 2.5%.⁷⁹ That number, however, is not an accurate representation of the nature of housing in Charlottetown, which is influenced by several other factors, including the transition to a hybrid model of student learning that came as a result of the global pandemic.

In 2018, a total of 4286 full-time students attended the University of Prince Edward Island (UPEI). Of these, 25.9% were international students, 20.6%

were Canadian students not from PEI, and 53.4% were students from PEI.⁸⁰ This means that there were at least 880 Canadian students from out-of-province and 1000 international students looking for housing in PEI, not to mention the 68.72% of local students who moved out of their homes to attend UPEI.⁸¹ Overall, these numbers amount to a total of 159 more students seeking housing in Charlottetown than in the previous year.⁸² However, PEI's Housing Action Plan cites the increase in international students attending UPEI's post-secondary institutions as one of the main issues behind Charlottetown's housing crisis—a biased perspective, given the numbers mentioned earlier.⁸³

Eventually, to attempt to deal with the housing crisis, the City of Charlottetown introduced new policies to regulate short-term rentals and incentivize developers to build affordable units. According to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, affordable housing should cost “less than 30% of a household's before-tax income.”⁸⁴ Introduced regulations included defining short-term rent as a period of 30 days and under, as well as allowing developers to go 20% over required zone densities as long as all added units are affordable.⁸⁵ Buildings were also allowed to be higher than the traditional 40 feet limit should the planning committee approve it.⁸⁶ The City also introduced rent supplements, making housing more affordable for current residents.⁸⁷

FIGURE 2: VACANCY RATE IN CHARLOTTETOWN



Source: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation



Students in PEI have been recognised as a low-income group several times, initially in 2018 in the provincial government's Demographics of Low-Income report, where 11.7% of PEI youth aged 18 to 24 were identified as having low income—the highest percentage for any demographic.⁸⁸ In 2018, results from the UPEI Student Union's (UPEISU) student-focused housing survey demonstrated that on average, students were putting 67% of their pre-tax income towards housing.⁸⁹ This meant that many full-time post-secondary students had to work part-time and sometimes full-time to pay housing prices that were, more often than not, unaffordable.

During the 2019 PEI provincial elections, the Progressive Conservative Party pledged to launch a PEI rental voucher program, similar to the rent supplements that had been previously offered, and stated that students would be eligible for this program as a low-income group.⁹⁰ However, when the Progressive Conservatives became PEI's first minority government, students were not included in the program. Students lost prospective summer jobs when COVID-19 hit Canada and PEI in March of 2020, and as a low-income group, this put them in a position of extreme financial insecurity. Making matters worse, international students were not eligible for most government financial assistance programs, including the Canada Emergency Student Benefit (CESB).⁹¹ However, the provincial government decided to extend a helping hand to students, including them in the Temporary Rental Assistance Benefit (TRAB) that would offer tenants up to \$1000 for rental aid over a period of three months.⁹² When the UPEISU advocated that the program be expanded, since

loss of summer jobs meant that students could not save for their rent and their education, the government was not responsive.

With enrolment numbers at UPEI growing, the housing crisis will continue to worsen. As of January 2021, UPEI enrolment stands at 5081 students, 1521 being international students.⁹³ Even though the Charlottetown vacancy rate for 2020 seems better than previous years, this number alone does not reflect the fact that PEI's post-secondary institutions have been operating primarily online in recent months. During this time, a large portion of the student population has studied from outside the province, explaining the sudden increase in vacancy in Charlottetown. This will quickly change now that UPEI announced that its 2021 Fall semester will see a return to a "normal academic experience" with "as much in-person, on-campus learning as possible."⁹⁴

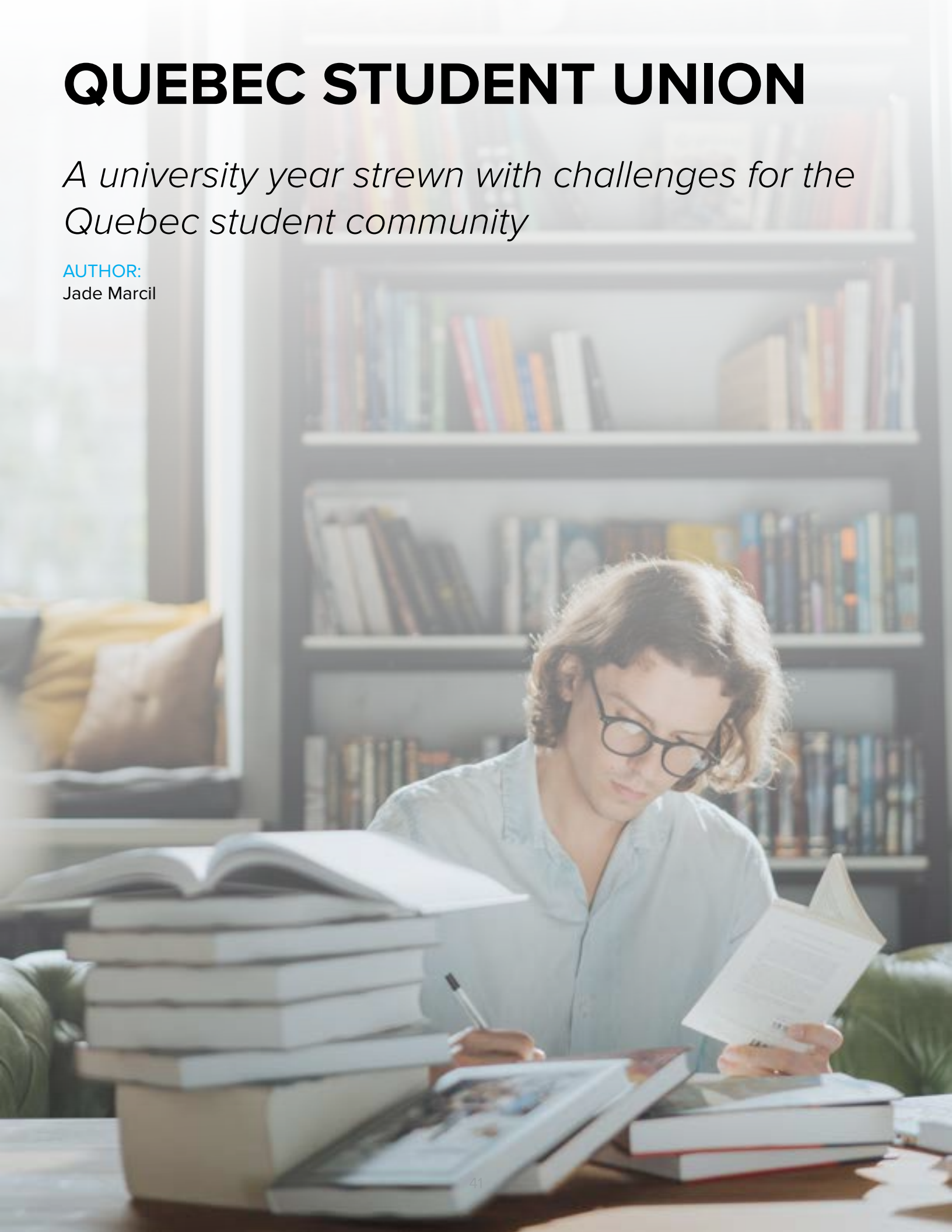
A student lens is essential to resolving PEI's housing crisis. Students need to be offered student-dedicated affordable housing, and as a low-income group that spends most of its income on housing, they need to be eligible for a long-term rent supplement program. The density of buildings in PEI need to be increased where possible, and stricter, realistic regulations need to be imposed on short-term rentals. Although UPEI's new 260-bed, nine-storey residence is a positive step, residence is often financially unattainable for many students and does not offer year-round accommodations.⁹⁵ Housing is a human right, and all students should have secure, affordable, and accessible housing over the course of their studies.

QUEBEC STUDENT UNION

A university year strewn with challenges for the Quebec student community

AUTHOR:

Jade Marcil





As is the case for everyone in Quebec, March 13, 2020, will leave an indelible mark on the entire university community. In Quebec, the François Legault government quickly announced that universities and CEGEPs would have to close their doors and cease all activities for two weeks. This break was intended to give universities time to plan the transition to offering all courses fully online. Some were able to move online practically at a snap of their fingers, while others simply lacked the necessary infrastructure and resources.

There were some policies adopted at the federal level that had a direct impact on university students in Quebec, including additional support for the federal granting agencies that support research and the Canada Emergency Student Benefit (CESB). However, other measures, like investments in the Canada Student Loans and Grants programs had no immediate impact on Quebec students.

At the beginning of the crisis, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education created a committee that brought stakeholders from across higher education to the same table. Representatives from labour unions, university administrations, national student associations, the Ministry and the Minister's cabinet, met each week to discuss and address issues caused by the pandemic. Although this committee still exists, it is now less active. Measures were quickly put in place to add flexibility to the

student financial aid program (AFE), such as suspending loan repayments, a more frequent analysis of requests for waivers, adapting the program for those whose studies were disrupted by the crisis, and more. Although these measures didn't fully address the needs of all students, they were welcome because they offered some respite for students. While these changes were positive, nothing was done to increase the loans and bursaries available to Quebec students.

In response, the Quebec Student Union, the Fédération étudiante collégiale du Québec (FECQ) and the Fédération des associations étudiantes universitaires en éducation permanente (FAEUQEP) came together to put pressure on the Minister and ensure that funds being transferred from the federal government would be fully invested in student bursaries. Following a change of Minister, students were successful in that goal. This resulted in a \$300 million investment for the 2020-2021 academic year into student financial aid. This historic investment will increase the financial support for program beneficiaries in the most need by nearly \$240 a month, as well as giving 20,000 new beneficiaries access to the program. Some individuals will receive as much as \$1,900 in additional bursaries for the year. Students finally had a bit of breathing room.

In addition to direct support for students, the government also increased funding for universities. Among the new investments,

\$14.2 million went towards hiring additional staff to provide psychosocial support, \$21 million for material support for students, and \$10 million to increasing pedagogical support. While this new funding is appreciated, there are still many challenges, such as the quality of academic activities and digital infrastructure which discourage many students during their studies. The many challenges caused by online learning have discouraged students while they also struggle from increased workloads and the challenges of isolation and strict public health measures.

This is why the QSU decided to conduct a study on the mental health of students in the fall of 2020. Unsurprisingly, the situation is extremely troubling, with 3% of respondents having attempted suicide over the twelve months prior. The survey also showed that 52% of respondents had felt a need for psychological support in fall 2020. The study's findings received significant media attention when Minister Danielle McCann announced an action plan for student mental health. This action plan should be coming into effect in Fall 2021, with the Quebec budget allotting \$60 million to support it over five years. This will provide critical, long-term funding for the support measures on campuses across Quebec!

In every field, the situation has changed quickly and often. A year that began with most courses being administered in person finished with almost every course being administered online, as of October, when the second wave hit Quebec. Fall 2020 was profoundly challenging, especially as students faced many problems with the digital platforms used for courses and evaluations. Many interns also faced challenges. Certain programs like nursing and education faced additional challenges due to difficulties of experiential learning opportunities and in-person practicums available during a global pandemic. Some internships took place entirely at a distance, while others took place with minimal supervision or without the option for specialization due to the crisis.

These challenges pushed local student associations to demand changes to regulations

and accommodations to better support students. Following student demands, certain universities took actions such as exempting late fees for the payment of student accounts or pushing back the date payment was due. Many also modified their academic calendars or made changes to their grading systems, allowing students to request a pass/fail notation for some or all of their courses. However, in some cases, this support arrived far into the semester, giving rise to significant frustrations among students who felt abandoned by their schools.

This academic year has been strewn with pitfalls everywhere in Canada. Today, the uncertainties of the pandemic continue across Quebec as we enter the third wave, requiring the closure of many campuses. Our hope for a return to in-person classes is now focused on the Fall of 2021. While many measures were put in place to support students, both financially and by offering academic accommodations, this crisis has also highlighted the serious need that students have for mental health support, especially over the long-term. This is why the government's action plan will be so important over the coming years.

Endnotes

- 1 Canadian Alliance of Student Associations. (2020). Students are Still Worried: COVID-19 and Post-Secondary Education. Canadian Alliance of Student Associations/ Alliance canadienne des associations étudiantes. https://www.casa-acae.com/students_are_still_worried_covid19
- 2 American College Health Association. (2019). American College Health Association-National College Health Assessment II: Canadian Consortium Executive Summary Spring 2019. Silver Spring, MD: American College Health Association. <https://www.cacuss.ca/files/Research/NCHA-II%20SPRING%202019%20CANADIAN%20REFERENCE%20GROUP%20EXECUTIVE%20SUMMARY.pdf>
- 3 University of Victoria. (2020). Student and Instructor Online Experience. University of Victoria. <https://onlineacademiccommunity.uvic.ca/TeachAnywhere/wp-content/uploads/sites/4913/2021/01/Online-Experience-2020F-Survey-Results-v14.pdf>
- 4 Mental Health Commission of Canada. (2017). Strengthening the Case for Investing in Canada's Mental Health System: Economic Considerations. https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/sites/default/files/2017-03/case_for_investment_eng.pdf
- 5 Mental Health Commission of Canada. (2013). Making the Case for Investing. <https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/media/3842>
- 6 Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions, "A Pathway to Hope" (Government of British Columbia, 2019), https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/british-columbians-our-governments/initiatives-plans-strategies/mental-health-and-addictions-strategy/bcmentalhealthroadmap_2019web-5.pdf.
- 7 Statistics Canada, "Table 37-10-0112-01 Postsecondary Enrolments, by Field of Study, International Standard Classification of Education, Age Group and Gender" (Statistics Canada, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.25318/3710011201-eng>.
- 8 Foundry BC, "Who We Are," Foundry BC, 2021, <https://foundrybc.ca/who-we-are/>
- 9 Government of British Columbia, "Here2Talk - Frequently Asked Questions," 2020, <https://Here2Talk.ca/faq>.
- 10 Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills, and Training, "Free Counselling Service Launches for Post-Secondary Students," *Government of British Columbia* (blog), April 16, 2020, <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2020AEST0024-000698>.
- 11 Foundry BC, "Who We Are," Foundry BC, 2021, <https://foundrybc.ca/who-we-are/>.
- 12 Laura Hensley, "'One Size Doesn't Fit All': Canadian Campuses Desperately Need Better Mental Health Services," *Global News*, October 8, 2019, <https://globalnews.ca/news/5969461/mental-health-canadian-campus/>.
- 13 Rani Srivastava and Raman Srivastava, "Supporting Post-Secondary Youth Mental Health Through Inclusive Practices Attuned to Culture," in *Culture, Diversity and Mental Health - Enhancing Clinical Practice*, ed. Masood Zangeneh and Alean Al-Krenawi, Advances in Mental Health and Addiction (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019), 225–42, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-26437-6_13.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 International Conference on Health Promoting Universities & Colleges (7th : 2015 : Kelowna, (B.C.)). (2015). Okanagan Charter : An international charter for health promoting universities & colleges [O]. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.14288/1.0132754>
- 16 Mental Health Commission of Canada. (2020) National Standard of Canada for Mental Health and Well-Being for Post-Secondary Students. <https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/studentstandard>
- 17 Canada Student Loans Program Annual Report, 2018 to 2019. (Ottawa, ON: Economic and Social Development Canada, 2021). Accessed online: <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/canada-student-loans-grants/reports/cslp-annual-2018-2019.html#tbl-001a>
- 18 This was headlined by a 6-month interest-free moratorium on CSLP payments. Information taken from Canada's COVID Economic Response Plan. (Ottawa, ON: Prime Minister's Office, 2020). Accessed online: <https://pm.gc.ca/en/news/news-releases/2020/03/18/prime-minister-announces-more-support-workers-and-businesses-through>
- 19 The wage subsidy provided by the program was increased to cover up to 100% of minimum wage; the end date for employment was extended to February 28, 2021; and, the program was expanded to include opportunities for part-time employment. All information taken from "Changes to the Canada Summer Jobs program to help businesses and young Canadians affected by COVID-19". (Ottawa, ON: Prime Minister's Office, 2020). Accessed online: <https://pm.gc.ca/en/news/news-releases/2020/04/08/changes-canada-summer-jobs-program-help-businesses-and-young>
- 20 "Support for students and new grads affected by COVID-19". (Ottawa, ON: Prime Minister's Office, 2020). Accessed online: <https://pm.gc.ca/en/news/news-releases/2020/04/08/changes-canada-summer-jobs-program-help-businesses-and-young>
- 21 Some highlights include: an expansion of funding and job opportunities through the National Research Council of Canada; \$75.2 million for distinctions-based support for First Nation, Metis, and Inuit post-secondary students; and, nearly \$300 million for student employment through a variety of partners. All information taken from "Support for students and new grads affected by COVID-19". (Ottawa, ON: Prime Minister's Office, 2020). Accessed online: <https://pm.gc.ca/en/news/news-releases/2020/04/08/changes-canada-summer-jobs-program-help-businesses-and-young> and "Supports for Students and Recent Graduates Impacted by COVID-19. (Ottawa, ON: Department of Finance Canada, 2020). Accessed online: <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-finance/news/2020/04/support-for-students-and-recent-graduates-impacted-by-covid-19.html>
- 22 For comparison, in 2018-2019, CSG and CSLP distributed roughly \$5.2 billion in financial aid. All information taken from Canada Student Loans Program Annual Report, 2018 to 2019. (Ottawa, ON: Economic and Social Development Canada, 2021). Accessed online: <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/canada-student-loans-grants/reports/cslp-annual-2018-2019.html#tbl-001a>
- 23 "Students are Still Worried: COVID-19 and Post Secondary Education". (Ottawa, ON: Canadian Alliance of Student Associations, 2020), p.7 and 9.

Fall Economic Statement 2020: Supporting Canadians and Fighting COVID-19. (Ottawa, ON: Department of Finance, 2020). Accessed online: <https://www.budget.gc.ca/fes-eea/2020/report-rapport/toc-tdm-en.html>

“Students are Still Worried”, CASA, p. 16.

Ibid., p.15.

Alex Usher. *The State of Postsecondary Education in Canada*. (Toronto: Higher Education Strategy Associations, 2020), p.9 and 19

“Students are Still Worried”, CASA.

Usher, *State of Postsecondary Education in Canada*, p. 9.

“Students are Still Worried”, CASA, p.5.

Kaufman, A., Jonker, L. & Hicks, M. (2018). *Differentiation within the Ontario College System: Options and Opportunities*. Toronto: Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario. https://heqco.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/College-Differentiation_ENGLISH.pdf

Colleges Ontario (2020). *Environmental Scan: Student and Graduate Profiles*. Colleges Ontario. https://cdn.agilitycms.com/colleges-ontario/documents-library/document-files/2019%20ES%20-%20Student%20and%20Graduate%20Profiles_20190716151048_0.pdf

Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (2020). *Students are Still Worried: COVID-19 and Post-Secondary Education*. Retrieved from: <https://d3n8a8pro7vnm.cloudfront.net/casaacae/pages/3140/attachments/original/1592503333/Students-Are-Still-Worried-ENG-Final2.pdf?1592503333>

Weingarten, H.P., Kaufman, A., Jonker, L., Hicks, M. (2017) *College Sustainability: Signal Data*. Toronto: Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario. <https://heqco.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Formatted-College-SustainabilityNEW2.pdf>

Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (2019). *Communications Monitoring Report 2019*. CRTC. <https://crtc.gc.ca/eng/publications/reports/policymonitoring/2019/cmr9.htm#a3.3>

Colleges Ontario (2020). *Environmental Scan: Student and Graduate Profiles*. Colleges Ontario. https://cdn.agilitycms.com/colleges-ontario/documents-library/document-files/2019%20ES%20-%20Student%20and%20Graduate%20Profiles_20190716151048_0.pdf

Pant, L. P., & Odame, H. H. (2017). Broadband for a sustainable digital future of rural communities: A reflexive interactive assessment. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 54, 435-450.

Statistics Canada (2020a). *School Closures and the Online Preparedness of Children during the COVID-19 Pandemic*. Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/45-28-0001/2020001/article/00001-eng.htm>

Government of Ontario (November 4, 2020). *Ontario Investing Nearly \$1 Billion to Expand and Improve Broadband and Cellular Access* [Press release]. Retrieved from: <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59057/ontario-investing-nearly-1-billion-to-expand-and-improve-broadband-and-cellular-access>

Government of Canada (2021). *National Broadband Internet Service Availability Map*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ic.gc.ca/app/sitt/bbmap/hm.html?lang=eng>

College Student Alliance (2021). *CSA Fall 2020 COVID-19 Student Survey: Report on Survey Findings*. College Student Alliance. Retrieved from: https://5c33872e-1daf-45ad-a331-ee599861fe06.filesusr.com/ugd/0b1b3b_05cca672131c4cd5a9b135e405810c2c.pdf

Pichette, J., Brumwell, S., Rizk, J. (2020). *Improving the Accessibility of Remote Higher Education: Lessons from the Pandemic and Recommendations*. Toronto: Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario. Retrieved from: <https://heqco.ca/pub/improving-the-accessibility-of-remote-higher-education-lessons-from-the-pandemic-and-recommendations/>

Colleges Ontario (2020). *Environmental Scan: Student and Graduate Profiles*. Colleges Ontario. https://cdn.agilitycms.com/colleges-ontario/documents-library/document-files/2019%20ES%20-%20Student%20and%20Graduate%20Profiles_20190716151048_0.pdf

Pichette, J., Brumwell, S., Rizk, J. (2020). *Improving the Accessibility of Remote Higher Education: Lessons from the Pandemic and Recommendations*. Toronto: Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario. Retrieved from: <https://heqco.ca/pub/improving-the-accessibility-of-remote-higher-education-lessons-from-the-pandemic-and-recommendations/>

Andrew Jeffrey, “University of Alberta students call for end to online exam monitoring,” *CBC News*, March 3, 2021, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/university-of-alberta-students-call-for-end-to-online-exam-monitoring-1.5933094>.

Babb, Orinthia. 2020. “Report paints sad portrait of child poverty in Manitoba”, *CBC News*, December 9. Accessed February 25, 2021. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/manitoba-poverty-central-report-1.5835198>.

Statistics Canada. “Aboriginal Peoples Highlight Tables, 2016 Census”, n.d. Accessed February 24, 2021. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/hltfst/abo-aut/Table.cfm?Lang=Eng&T=101&S=99&O=A>.

Government of Manitoba. February 2021. *Skills, Knowledge and Talent Strategy*. Accessed February 24, 2021. https://www.gov.mb.ca/asset_library/en/mbskills/MB-IBG-STK-Report.pdf

Business Council of Manitoba. 2020. *Horizon Manitoba: Building a brighter future together*. January 17. Accessed on February 24, 2021. https://www.uwinnipeg.ca/president/docs/2019_02_horizons_report_booklet_wr.pdf.

UM Today. 2019. “Don’t let anything hold you back: Go to U of M with the Access Program”, April 4. Accessed on February 25, 2021 (<https://news.umanitoba.ca/dont-let-anything-hold-you-back/>).

51 Manitoba Women's Advisory Council. *The Status of Women in Manitoba*. March 2018. Accessed February 24, 2021
https://gov.mb.ca/msw/pdf/status_womenin_manitoba.pdf.

52 National Aboriginal Economic Development Board. 2016. "Reconciliation: Growing Canada's Economy by \$27.7 Billion". Accessed February 24, 2021.
http://www.naadb-cndea.com/reports/naadb_report_reconciliation_27_7_billion.pdf.

53 Manitoba Collaborative Indigenous Education Blueprint. 2015. "About Us," n.d. Accessed March 1, 2021. <https://www.mcieb.ca/>

54 Rossman, Christine. 2019. "Access for all? Cuts to Manitoba post-secondary program create barrier for students who need most help", *CBC News*, May 11.
 Accessed February 24, 2021. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/opinion-manitoba-access-programs-1.5130346>

55 Government of Canada, Statistics Canada. "Canadians Spend More Money and Time Online during Pandemic and over Two-Fifths Report a Cyber
 Incident." *The Daily*. October 14, 2020. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/201014/dq201014a-eng.htm>

56 Shelley Steves. "Rural Internet Upgrades Announced for New Brunswick." *Global News*. November 13, 2020.
<https://globalnews.ca/news/7461372/rural-internet-upgrades-new-brunswick/>.

57 Ibid.

58 Lise Brin. "The Time is Now for Open Educational Resources." *CARL-ABRC*. July 16, 2020. <https://www.carl-abrc.ca/news/the-time-is-now-for-oer/>

59 Financial Consumer Agency of Canada. "Budgeting for student life." Accessed online:
<https://www.canada.ca/en/financial-consumeragency/services/budget-student-life.html>

60 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* (June 2017).

61 Abacus Data. What motivates, 18-25 year olds leading up to the federal election, "What motivates 18-25 year olds leading up to the federal election." (2019).

62 Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission Table A: Undergraduate Arts and Sciences Full-time1 Tuition Fees and Provincial Tuition
 Rebates/Bursaries 2018-2019, Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission Table A: Undergraduate Arts and Sciences Full-time1 Tuition Fees and
 Provincial Tuition Rebates/Bursaries 2018-2019 (2019).

63 Campbell, D. Economic impact of immigration in New Brunswick, Economic impact of immigration in New Brunswick (2019).

64 Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission. *Measures of Student Progress and Outcomes: University Participation (2003-2004 to 2017-2018)*.
 (MPHEC, 2019).

65 Ryan Gibson, Joanne Fitzgibbons and Nina R Nunez. *Nova Scotia* (State of Rural Canada, 2017).

66 Kathryn McMullen. *Postsecondary education among underrepresented and minority groups* (StatCan, 2011).

67 Ibid.

68 Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, *2019 Report Card on Child and Family Poverty in Nova Scotia*

69 Ibid.

70 Consultation with Student Financial Assistance Office, June 2019.

71 Statistics Canada. *Census In Brief: Does Education Pay? A Comparison of Earnings by Level of Education in Canada and its Provinces and Territories*. (
 Statistics Canada, 2017).

72 Numbers provided by Dr. Lisa Barrett

73 Canada Mortgage and Housing Association. *Average Apartment Rents, Vacant and Occupied Units* (CMHA, 2018).

74 Government of Nova Scotia. *Post-Secondary Students Receive COVID-19 Response Grant*. (2020).

75 Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission. *Undergraduate Arts and Sciences Full-time Tuition Fees and Provincial Tuition Rebates/Bursaries
 2020-2021*. (MPHEC, 2020).

76 Kevin Yarr, "Prince Edward Island Still Canada's Fastest-Growing Province," *CBC news* (CBC/Radio Canada, September 29, 2020),
<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/prince-edward-island/pei-population-2020-1.5743250>.

77 Government of Prince Edward Island, "Housing Action Plan for Prince Edward Island 2018-2023,"
https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/sites/default/files/publications/pei-housing-action-plan_2018-2023.pdf

78 Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, "CMHC Rental market Survey,"
[https://www03.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/hmip-pimh/en/TableMapChart/Table?TableId=2.2.33&GeographyId=11&GeographyTypeId=2&DisplayAs=Table&Geogra](https://www03.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/hmip-pimh/en/TableMapChart/Table?TableId=2.2.33&GeographyId=11&GeographyTypeId=2&DisplayAs=Table&GeographyName=Prince%20Edward%20Island#TableMapChart/3300/3/Charlottetown)
[phyName=Prince%20Edward%20Island#TableMapChart/3300/3/Charlottetown](https://www03.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/hmip-pimh/en/TableMapChart/3300/3/Charlottetown)

79 Ibid.

80 University of Prince Edward Island. *UPEI by the Numbers 2018*. https://files.upei.ca/president/upei_by_the_numbers_2018.pdf

81 UPEI Student Union, "Housing Survey Results," Report, Student Union, University of Prince Edward Island. Charlottetown, PE, 2018.

82 University of Prince Edward Island, "UPEI by the Numbers 2017," https://files.upei.ca/president/upei_by_the_numbers_2017.pdf

83 Government of Prince Edward Island, "Housing Action Plan for Prince Edward Island 2018-2023," p. 5.

84 Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, "About Affordable Housing in Canada," (March 31, 2018),
<https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/developing-and-renovating/develop-new-affordable-housing/programs-and-information/about-affordable-housing-in-can>

[ada#:~:text=In%20Canada%2C%20housing%20is%20considered,a%20household's%20before%2Dtax%20income.](#)

- 85 Natalia Goodwin, “Restricting Short-Term Rentals Part of Charlottetown Affordable Housing Plan,” CBC news (CBC/Radio Canada, January 31, 2019),
<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/prince-edward-island/pei-charlottetown-affordable-housing-1.4999907>.
- 86 Ibid
- 87 Government Of Prince Edward Island, “Rent Supplements Providing Housing Assistance To Islanders,” (October 29, 2018),
<https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/news/rent-supplements-providing-housing-assistance-islanders>
- 88 Government of Prince Edward Island, “Demographics of Low Income,” (May 17, 2018),
https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/sites/default/files/publications/demographics_of_low_income_poverty_reduction_backgrounder_may_2018.pdf
- 89 UPEI Student Union, “Housing Survey Results.”
- 90 Progressive Conservative Party of PEI, “2019 Platform: It’s About People,”
https://d3n8a8pro7vnm.cloudfront.net/peipc/pages/1574/attachments/original/1555084646/PC-2019_Platform.pdf?1555084646
- 91 Government of Canada, “Canada Emergency Student Benefit – Eligibility Criteria,” (November 15, 2020),
<https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/benefits/emergency-student-benefit/cesb-who-apply.html>
- 92 Stu Neatby, “P.E.I. Expands Rental Subsidy Program After Facing Initial Backlash,” , The Guardian, (April 02, 2020),
<https://www.theguardian.pe.ca/news/local/pei-expands-rental-subsidy-program-after-facing-initial-backlash-433049/#:~:Text=The%20temporary%20rental%20assistance%20benefit,Be%20paid%20directly%20to%20landlords.>
- 93 President’s Report to the UPEI Board of Governors, “Strategic and Key Initiatives: Enrollment,” February 16, 2021.
- 94 University Of Prince Edward Island, “Update To Students on the UPEI 2021 Summer and Fall Academic Semesters,” (February 24, 2021),
<https://www.Upei.ca/Communications/News/2021/02/Update-Students-Upei-2021-Summer-And-Fall-Academic-Semesters>
- 95 Michael Robar, “In Photos: New Upei Residence Takes Shape,” (September 03, 2020),
<https://www.theguardian.pe.ca/lifestyles/local-lifestyles/in-photos-new-uepi-residence-takes-shape-492649/>



PUBLICATION DESIGN BY:

Chisanga Mwamba

Communications & Operations Coordinator

Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance