

OUA

Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance

— SHARED PERSPECTIVES

A JOINT PUBLICATION ON SECTOR SUSTAINABILITY

Canadian Alliance of Student Associations
Council of Alberta University Students
New Brunswick Student Alliance
Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance
Students Nova Scotia
Union étudiante du Québec

2023

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MESSAGE FROM THE PARTNERS



Over the past six years, student advocacy organizations across Canada have joined together to release *Shared Perspectives*. This publication raises awareness about student-facing issues in our post-secondary sectors. Previous issues have discussed a wide range of post-secondary topics, including student financial aid (2022), COVID-19 (2021), student employability (2019), gender-based and sexual violence prevention and response (2018), and student mental health (2017).

These issues aimed to address specific problems within the post-secondary sector affecting students directly. This year is no different as this edition examines the strength of the post-secondary education system nationally through the lens of sector sustainability. As the post-secondary sector tackles the myriad of issues that have been written about before, they continue to do so under the constraints of ever-shrinking provincial contributions and the evolving needs of their student bodies. As institutions nationwide navigate austere conditions, students are the first to feel the effects.

Cutbacks to student financial aid programs, rising tuition costs, and limited earning power mean students are bearing the brunt of the unsustainable funding models nationwide. Provincial governments across the country are responsible for creating fiscally responsible funding strategies and ensuring that institutions are not over-relying on students to alleviate the strain that these cutbacks create.



As the post-secondary sector continues to navigate post-pandemic recovery and ongoing economic stressors, our organizations have come together to offer recommendations tailored to our students across the country to inspire long-term solutions to this issue. Maintaining sector sustainability will ensure that post-secondary education remains affordable and accessible to all.



Students across various marginalized student groups, including Indigenous students, Black students, racialized students, first-generation students, low-income students, and international students, deserve the opportunity to pursue post-secondary education without incurring undue financial burdens due to ineffective funding practices. Public education requires public funding, and we, as a collective, hope both provincial and federal governments can come together to maintain this practice.



MESSAGE FROM THE PARTNERS



WHO WE ARE

Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA)

The Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA) is a non-partisan, not-for-profit advocacy organisation representing students at 25 student associations across the country. Through our partnership with the Quebec Student Union/Union étudiante du Québec (UEQ), CASA represents 273,000 students across Canada. CASA advocates for accessible, affordable, innovative, and high quality post-secondary education in Canada. For 28 years, CASA has done so successfully through policy and research development, awareness campaigns, government relations efforts, and partnerships with other stakeholders in the education sector. Part of this work is ensuring that conversations surrounding post-secondary education are undertaken with the most up-to-date information and with direct feedback from students and other leading advocacy stakeholders across the country.

CASA is located on the traditional unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishnaabeg People.

Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance (OUSA)

The Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance (OUSA) represents the interests of approximately 160,000 professional and undergraduate, full-time, and part-time university students at nine 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.

The Home Office of the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance is situated on the traditional territory of the Huron-Wendat, the Haudenosaunee, and most recently, the Mississaugas of the Credit River, and is covered by Treaty 13 of the Upper Canada Treaties. We acknowledge that this settlement, Toronto, was founded on the genocide, displacement, and manipulation of Indigenous Peoples through settler-colonialism, and that this wide-reaching harm continues to impact communities today, including Indigenous students on their post-secondary campuses. We also celebrate and honour the resilience, accomplishments, and strengths of Indigenous Peoples who are reclaiming their culture and dismantling barriers.

New Brunswick Student Alliance (NBSA)

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.

NEW BRUNSWICK STUDENT ALLIANCE As a provincial entity, the New Brunswick Student Alliance (NBSA) recognizes and respectfully acknowledges that it carries out its work on the traditional unceded territory of the Wolastoqiyik, Mi'kmaq and Peskotomuhkati peoples. This territory is covered by the "Treaties of Peace and Friendship" which these nations first signed. The treaties did not deal with the surrender of lands and resources, but in fact recognized Mi'kmaq and Wolastoqiyik titles and established the rules for what was to be an ongoing relationship between nations. We, the staff, and members of the NBSA, pay respect to the elders, past and present, and descendants of this land.

Council Of Alberta University Students (CAUS)

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 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.

These lands, waters, and living beings in the Treaty lands within the colonial borders of Alberta have been cared for by Indigenous peoples since time immemorial. We condemn the genocide that has been done and continues to be done against Indigenous Peoples through colonialism. We celebrate the strength and resilience of Indigenous peoples and their cultures. We acknowledge that, in addition to being denied access to physical spaces, colonialism also sought and seeks to restrict Indigenous peoples' access to cultural, spiritual, educational, and governmental spaces. We acknowledge the expertise First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples, cultures, and knowledge keepers

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have and respect their leadership. We commit to reconciliation and acknowledge that this commitment cannot be made in word only but must be lived out in the actions, processes, and procedures of the organization year after year.

Students Nova Scotia (StudentsNS)

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.

Students Nova Scotia is located in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People, and we acknowledge them as the past, present, and future caretakers of this land. This territory is covered by the "Treaties of Peace and Friendship" which Mi'kmaq Wəlastəkwiyik (Maliseet), and Passamaquoddy Peoples first signed with the British Crown in 1725. The treaties did not deal with surrender of lands and resources but in fact recognized Mi'kmaq and Wəlastəkwiyik (Maliseet) title and established the rules for what was to be an ongoing relationship between nations. We are all Treaty people.

Quebec Student Union (QSU)

The QSU represents over 91,000 university campus members from its 10 member associations across Quebec. It aims to be the main interlocutor on issues of accessibility to higher education and the living conditions of students with various government authorities, interest and social groups.

Quebec Student Union acknowledges that we are located on unceded Indigenous lands. The Kanien'kehá:ka Nation is recognized as the custodian of the lands and waters on which we gather today. Tiohtià:ke/Montréal is historically known as a gathering place for many First Nations. Today, it is home to a diverse population of Indigenous and other peoples.

QSU respects the continued connections with the past, present and future in our ongoing relationships with Indigenous and other peoples within the Montréal community, but also with all the Indigenous all around the province of Quebec.

The Road to Perdition: Canada's Struggle for a Sustainable Post-Secondary Education Sector

Trevor Potts,
Policy and Research Analyst
Canadian Alliance of Student Associations

The State of Student Financial Aid in Canada

Government Funding for Post-Secondary

The federal government provides funding for post-secondary education (PSE) through four primary mechanisms:

1. Research granting councils (e.g., Tri-Agencies);
2. Scientific agencies and government departments (e.g., Health Canada);
3. Occasional post-secondary investments (e.g., Canada Emergency Student Benefit¹);
4. The Canada Social Transfer (CST).

Funding from the CST, delivered as operating grants from the provinces, form the largest source of funding for both post-secondary institutions (PSIs) and provincial financial aid systems. As projected for 2023-24, the CST will provide \$16.4 billion in federal transfer payments to the provinces for the purpose of spending towards PSE, social assistance, and childcare, with approximately 30.7% (or \$5 billion) being allocated towards post-secondary education^{2,3}.

In all provinces, the incumbent provincial government decides how much of their Canada Social Transfer funding will be allocated towards post-secondary⁴. CST amounts are largely shaped by the size of a province or territory's student financial aid system, among other factors. Figure A shows the CST funding amounts by the top 5 largest student financial aid systems for 2023/24.

Figure A: Top 5 federal transfer amounts for 2023-24, as allocated through the Canada Social Transfer

| Province or Territory | Federal support, as allocated through the CST for 2023-24 (in millions of dollars) |
|-----------------------|--|
| Ontario | 6,382 |
| Quebec | 3,644 |
| British Columbia | 2,253 |
| Alberta | 1,919 |
| Manitoba | 591 |
| Total | 16,416 |

The Canadian Student Financial Aid System

The Canadian student financial aid system largely operates as a joint-venture shared by both federal and provincial governments⁵. The federal government operates its own national program, called the Canada Student Financial Assistance (CSFA) program, while each province or territory has its own student aid program. Nine provinces and one territory operate their programs in tandem with the federal counterpart, with the exception of Quebec, Nunavut and the Northwest Territories, who have opted out and instead receive compensation which they use to fund their own autonomous programs⁶.

For the nine participating provinces and territories, federal and provincial SFA programs work in-tandem to provide students

with a mix of repayable loans and non-repayable grants in order to fund their post-secondary education⁷, with the Federal government contributing approximately 60% of funding, and the province 40%⁸. The calculations that determine the amount of each that a student will receive is decided by multiple factors, which include students' tuition and living costs, mandatory fees, and family income⁹.

Through this joint-funding model¹⁰, participating provinces manage the distribution of funds from both their own provincial student assistance program (e.g., Ontario Student Assistance Program)¹¹, and the Federal government's national program, the CSFA, which includes both Canada Student Grants (CSG) and Canada Student Loans (CSL)¹².

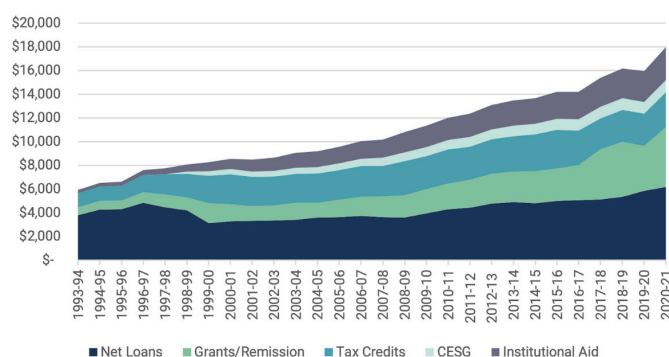
Usage of Canada's Student Financial Aid System

There are four major sources of student financial aid:

1. Needs-Based Student Aid:
Grants (Non-repayable)
Loans (Repayable and Forgivable)
2. Tax Credits
3. Education Savings Grants
4. Institutional Scholarships

Figure 5.12 shows the overall trends for these sources of student financial aid, with the majority of Canadians student financial aid distributed as either net loans or grants.

Figure 5.12 — Total Student Financial Assistance by Type, Selected years, 1993-94 to 2020-21, in Millions of \$2020



Several trends are noticeable within Canada's student financial assistance system over the past three decades.

First, the total amount of funding given to individual Canadian students has approximately tripled, up from \$6 billion (late 1990s) to \$18 billion (2020-21), of which nearly two-thirds is non-repayable assistance or grants. In fact, the total amount of non-repayable assistance (\$11.8 billion) exceeds the total amount of tuition paid (\$10 billion) in Canada. Currently, 542,000 students access Canada Student Grants (CSG) each year, totalling \$3 billion in federal student aid received for 2020-21¹³.

Second, the system is far less loan-based, down from nearly two-thirds of all student aid (1990s) to just 34% (2020-21). Currently 576,000 students who access Canada Student Loans (CSL), totalling \$4.2 billion in federal student aid received for 2020-21¹⁴. Each province varies in how their students access provincial SFA programs. For example, in the most recent year of available

data for Canada's largest province, 441,000 (of a total of 864,834) post-secondary students in Ontario accessed OSAP, totalling to approximately \$1.7 billion in OSAP funding distributed¹⁶.

Third, student borrowing has risen sharply in recent years, up 27% since 2017-18, and is frequently used by students to supplement sources of non-repayable aid. As a result, student debt has remained fairly consistent over the past two decades¹⁷. Average debt levels currently sit at \$27,000 for undergraduates, and \$15,000 for college students, and the percentage of students with government debt range between 30-35% (college) and 40-45% (university).

Lastly, student financial aid systems are increasingly facing funding shortfalls across Canada. Provincial transfers per domestic student are on average down 14.3% since 2008-09. Conversely, we have seen federal transfers to provinces (respecting post-secondary) increase over time, now fulfilling 21% of provincial spending on higher education, up from 14% since 2008-09. Federal investments also rose significantly during the initial 2020-21 COVID-19 response, including the doubling of Canada Student Grants, freezing of student federal loan interest.

However, as Canada recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic, federal funding has declined, while provincial transfers have not risen to accommodate these shifts. Budget 2023 announced the removal of doubled Canada Student Grants, from

from \$6,000 down to \$4,200, which although higher than the pre-2019 maximums of \$3000, still represents an \$1,800 cut in non-repayable aid that students are not receiving. As a result of the decline in both federal and provincial transfers, Canada's student financial aid system remains precariously positioned for the future. CASA recommends that the federal government reinstate its CSG maximums to \$6,000 in order to support students most in need with critical student financial aid.

Summary of Recommendations

Federal Recommendations

Conversely, to help improve existing Federal student financial aid policies, there are also steps that the government of Canada can take.

The needs of post-secondary students in Ontario have changed dramatically in recent years, and the Federal government has a responsibility to ensure that its programs are student-centric. To improve the effectiveness of the CSFA program, the Federal government should first adjust the allowable costs assessment criteria for single independent students to include accommodation costs at the market value of a single occupancy rental apartment. Second, in order to better reflect the financial timelines imposed on students by post-secondary institutions, the federal government should change the disbursement date of financial aid to be prior to the commencement of courses. Third, the Federal government should increase the grace period for the Repayment Assistance Program (RAP) from 6 to 24 months, which has been shown to better allow students to alleviate student debt¹⁸. Additionally, to better match the changing financial needs of students, the Federal government should transform remaining tax credits to upfront needs-

based grants, as well as introduce a CPI index-matched component to CSG program grants.

To better address the needs of under-represented students, the Federal government should broaden its criteria for CSFA so that all students with accessibility concerns can have access to the supports they need to attend PSE, including broadening the definition of disability to mirror the Proposed Accessible Canada Act which recognizes the episodic nature of disabilities, and following the Ontario Human Rights Commission's call to eliminate the requirement of a formal diagnosis on the basis that a disclosure is a human rights concern.

Lastly, in order to safeguard the long-term efficacy and sustainability of student financial aid in Ontario, the Federal government should perform a thorough review of its student financial aid programs to better assess their adequacy and effectiveness. Furthermore, the Federal government should further commit to extending and increasing investments into student financial aid, and to returning grant maximum amounts to their post-COVID-19 levels of \$6,000 for the Canada Student Grants program.

Conclusion

Ultimately, both Federal and Provincial governments, as well as Canada's post-secondary institutions, all have a responsibility to ensure that the student financial aid ecosystem in Canada is effectively impacting those who need assistance the most: post-secondary students. By implementing strategic changes to adapt to existing challenges, Canada can better position its post-secondary sector more sustainably to be a world-class leader on the international stage.

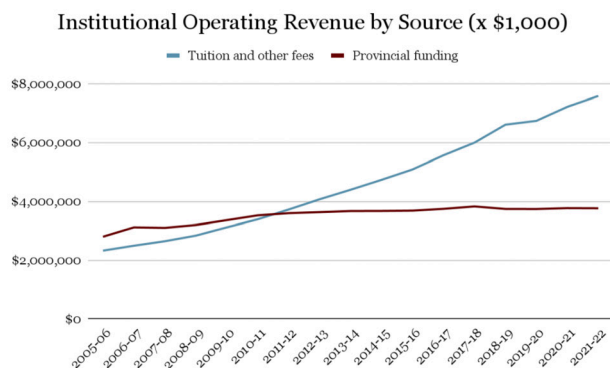
Burden to Bear- Ontario's Overreliance on International Students

Octavia Andrade-Dixon,
Research and Policy Analyst,
Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance

Ontario is renowned for its robust public post-secondary sector, with 23 universities and 22 colleges. The university sector is well known for its research outputs, institutional diversity, and accessibility. Due to its positive reputation, Ontarian universities have attracted international students worldwide looking for quality, affordable education, and improved livelihoods post-graduation. While this has remained the case for many years, there has been a recent shift away from affordability for international students. As the post-secondary sector has grappled with funding cutbacks at the provincial level and stagnant domestic revenue avenues, universities have turned to international student tuition to make up for the funding “losses.” Over the past decade, this has resulted in international students facing consistently unpredictable increases in their tuition, leading to increased financial burdens for many students and the unfortunate termination of their studies for others. Post-secondary institutions in Ontario are facing sustainability issues that over-dependence on international tuition will not fix. This article explores Ontario universities’ history, funding trends, and how universities can better serve their diverse student populations.

Ontario Funding System

The Ontario government positions universities as publicly funded institutions; however, in recent years, a decline in funding has led institutions to adopt the moniker of publicly assisted institutions. Post-secondary institutions’ (PSIs) operating budgets have four primary revenue sources: provincial grants, tuition and other student fees, federal research

Table 1: Institutional Operating Revenue-General Expendable Funds by Source of Funds²²

Cutbacks in funding

In 2019-20, the provincial government reduced domestic tuition by 10% and in the following year, placed a freeze on annual tuition increases, halting the growth of a primary source of revenue for institutions. Since its announcement, the freeze has been extended yearly and is still in effect²³. The Council of Ontario Universities asserts that the cut and freeze have “cost the sector \$1.2 billion since 2019, and each additional year of a freeze means universities lose out on \$740 million in revenue.”²⁴ Before this announcement, universities had been experiencing a steady decline in provincial funding. Operating grants previously accounted for 48-52% of insti-

tutional funding from the 2000s to the 2010s²⁵. Currently, provincial contributions stand at 31.2% in 2023²⁶, an all-time low since the standardization of the Ontario funding model. As government funding began to trend downwards, institutions turned to tuition fees to offset the loss of provincial grants. Student contributions now account for 67% of operating funds for institutions in Ontario²⁷. This shift has unjustly burdened students with the weight of supporting their institutions, especially international students whose tuition remains unregulated.

International tuition as alternative funding

International students have become a coveted population in the last decade. Beginning in 2014, provinces were encouraged by the federal government to increase international student enrolment such that Canada would reach 450,000 international students by 2022²⁸. With over 50% of international students choosing Ontarian institutions, there was already a strong flow of students entering the province²⁹. In the wake of the tuition freeze, institutions turned to international students to fill the anticipated funding gaps through greater student recruitment and increased tuition fees. Unlike domestic tuition, there are no regulations for international student tuition in Canada³⁰. Institutions can increase international tuition at unpredictable rates year to year.

Over the last five years, there have been fluctuating increases in international student tuition. Immediately following the tuition freeze, international students experienced an 8% increase in their tuition. During the subsequent 2020-2021 school year, there was a 6.34% increase and an 8% for 2022-2023 tuition³¹.

International students have been positioned as a viable and consistent means to offset cutbacks in university budgets, adding to their already vulnerable status in Ontario.

Impact on students

International students bear the many repercussions of policies that fail to be student-centric, often leading to traumatic educational experiences. The provincial government and institutions claim no responsibility for international students’ wellness or financial security before potentially obtaining citizenship.

International students are often recruited to study abroad by education agencies in their countries of origin (COO)³². Third-party agents advertise the programs available and how families can finance their children’s studies. In India - the country with the largest population of international students in Ontario - it is not uncommon for these recruitment agents to encourage families to sell land or take out lines of credit to finance their children’s education³³. The International Students Within Canada Survey found 69% of students surveyed had familial debt³⁴. Ontario universities and the government do not have partnerships with these agencies and do not participate in ensuring prospective students are given accurate information. This leads to many students entering Canadian degrees unaware of the full scope of the financial and emotional cost associated with their educational pathway.

Students and their families are often unprepared to shoulder the tuition fees that can vary significantly from year to year. They are ineligible for student loans from the province and exempt from many needs-based grants available at their institution³⁵. With limited international student

funds varying from school to school, students have little recourse when they are in financial constraints. In turn, they face lower persistence rates than domestic students³⁶. They also incur greater debt in their home countries when able to complete their education, which ultimately lands on the backs of the graduates. Many students, especially those from lower-income countries, are expected to assist in repaying the debts incurred while studying abroad³⁷. In addition to the cost of living, which is often under-explained to students, transit costs, and school fees, international students bear a great financial burden when undertaking a degree.

Unlike domestic students, international students do not have equal access to the job market, which would assist in alleviating some of their financial burdens. International students are permitted to work 20 hours a week maximum, a policy which only saw interim hour increases during the COVID-19 pandemic³⁸. These students often ended up with low-paying minimum wage jobs that hire part-time and, in other cases, require working longer hours “under the table” at other establishments³⁹. After graduation, the economic disparities between international and domestic students persist. International students have greater debt and earn less than their domestic counterparts⁴⁰. Despite the promise of a more prosperous life through immigration, international students often face more significant struggles than they could have anticipated.

Impact on the sector

Institutions were encouraged to increase international student enrollment for revenue purposes, and recent trends illustrate the volatility of this model. Currently, Ontario is experiencing a shortage of affordable housing and a lack of student-friendly

According to the CMHC, vacancy rates stand at 1.9%, which is the lowest nationally since 2001, with Ontarian university municipalities hovering around lower to similar rates⁴¹. As a result, the federal government is considering introducing a cap on international study visas until federal and provincial governments can solve the housing crisis⁴². This would impact institutions' ability to increase their recruitment and profits. As many institutions are becoming more dependent on international students to fulfill their enrollment targets and provide revenue, an obstacle to their entry could immediately impact institutions' fiscal health. While this is only one example, it illustrates the unpredictability inherent to this model. When immigration policies are affected by global crises such as the recent COVID-19 pandemic, diplomatic relations, economic downturn, and other external factors, institutions are left without a safety net to offset a potential slowdown in international enrollment. As such, the sustainability of Ontario's post-secondary institutions is jeopardized by this practice.

Recommendations

International students deserve accessible, affordable education like their domestic counterparts. OUSA encourages the Ontario government to increase operating grants so that students are contributing no more than a third towards operating revenue and that institutions are no longer over-reliant on student tuition as their primary source of revenue. Complimentary to this, the provincial government should implement incoming and in-cohort tuition increase caps such that international students are afforded financial predictability throughout their studies. This cap should not exceed a 3-5% increase, similar to domestic student tuition. Prior to enrollment, students should be aware of the realities of studying in Canada. To support this, the provincial government should develop guidelines regarding what information

institutions must share with potential students prior to enrollment. Additionally, to improve international student well-being, the province should mandate through the Tuition Fee Framework that universities establish an international tuition set-aside at the same rate as the domestic set-aside, with funds directed to need-based financial aid for international students. This will help ensure the retention of international students throughout their degrees and as working professionals post-graduation.

Conclusion

International students are valuable members of the Ontario post-secondary community and beyond. Through their pursuit of education in Ontario, classrooms gain valuable insights from students with a global perspective and post-graduation, they enrich the cultural, societal, and economic fabric of our province. However, they have been positioned as the sector's way of remediating the shortfall of government funding and the shrinking support institutions are receiving. To maintain sector sustainability and the reputation as a safe and viable option for international students, Ontario's post-secondary education can no longer rely on this unsustainable practice. All students deserve access to quality education and institutional support, regardless of their immigration status. Treating international students as a revenue stream rather than people jeopardizes this vision. It is up to the provincial government and institutions to create more sustainable practices to ensure the longevity and health of the sector, and not limit students who are here to pursue their dreams.

Creating a Clear Pathway for the future of New Brunswick PSE

Sydonia Chandon,
Executive Director 2021-Present
Alex Nguyen,
Vice-Chair
Rohin Minocha-Mckenney,
Chair
New Brunswick Student Alliance (NBSA)

Letter from Chair and Vice-chair

The past years have been the most unprecedented time in our history as a province and so many have been and continue to be impacted as a result of the pandemic, including thousands of students in New Brunswick. As students we continue to partner with our post-secondary institutions in adapting to a new way of learning, teaching, researching, and working. At this moment, post-secondary students are facing financial strain, and worsening mental health with inadequate support, especially for minority groups. The lack of affordable housing and the decrease in the quality of life overall for students continue to add additional barriers for students to pursue their education to the fullest.

As we are looking to close these gaps and provide students with a future that has the support and access to services that our students need to succeed, we continue to advocate for student-centered solutions through increased support in financial aid, affordable student housing, funding to public universities, and mental health support that will help students in the long run. Recent wins on provincial elimination of interest rates on student loans and increase financial aids have been a welcoming sign as we continue to seek for meaningful long-term change that sets out a path for the future of not just post-secondary education but the future of New Brunswick. It is more important now than ever to have provincial-wide action plans and high-level cooperation among institutions to clear away obstacles and tackle challenges in this unprecedented time as multi-faceted issues require multi-faceted solutions.

As the future workforce of tomorrow, the investment in our student's post-secondary Education is fundamental in ensuring stability today and prosperity down the road for the province of New Brunswick. We implore you to strongly consider the recommendations which we believe are integral to improving the post-secondary education experience in New Brunswick. Collaboration between government, students, regulators, and post-secondary institutions is vital in conversations about our future and your support will have a lasting impact within our province. We call for a united front in creating a sustainable future for success both provincially and federally.

Rohin Minocha-McKenney
President of Mount Allison Students' Union
Chair of the New Brunswick Student Alliance

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

Introduction

Over the course of April 2022 to March 2023 the Government made a series of changes to the province's financial aid program and operating grant:

- Increases in Student Financial Assis-

tance; Bursaries increasing from 130 to 160 per week and student loans from 160 to 200 weekly⁴³.

- Increases in the operating grant given to universities up 2 percent with an additional 1.5 per cent increase based on enrolment⁴⁴.
- Continuation of interest free student loans that was previously announced in 2022⁴⁵.
- Still no promises or changes made for International Student Tuition Regulation or Access to student loans.

History of Student Financial Aid in New Brunswick

The NBSA has consistently taken a firm stance on the real cost of post-secondary education. Since the early 2000s, we have advocated for sustainable funding from the government to maintain reasonable tuition costs so that students can manage the financial burden of post-secondary education. For the last two decades, our organization has seen students financially and emotionally drained without government action to address their calls for an affordable, predictable, and sustainable post-secondary system.

One of the biggest hit areas has been student financial aid. New Brunswick's financial aid system has been unpredictable as a result of our province's political climate. Each new government introduces changes to our student financial aid framework, adding or removing programs that



were implemented by their predecessors.

However, we have had a history of success in addressing the concerns to affordability of post-secondary education in the province. In early 2016, we played a pivotal role in Premier Brian Gallant's introduction of the Tuition Access Bursary (TAB), which addressed the need to increase affordability and access for low-income New Brunswick students. The bursary provided upfront, non-repayable assistance for students with gross household incomes of \$60,000 or less, attending publicly-funded undergraduate university programs in New Brunswick. Recently, Under Premier Higgs Government we played an integral role in the removal of interest on student loans which NB was far behind compared to other provinces. This year we were fortunate to see our operating grant ask included in the budget, a policy which we have been consistent on for the last three years. We asked for a 3 percent increase and received a 2 percent permanent increase with a conditional 1.5 percent increase. This will be beneficial for our students in the long-run and achieve some sector sustainability if the government continues to account for inflation each year when considering an increase in these grants.

Recent Student Financial Aid Cutbacks

During the summer of 2022 the Government of New Brunswick announced the cancellation of the NB-EI program which affected over 7,000 students enrolled in post-secondary schools⁴⁶. The Government's reason behind this decision was that the program was being utilized for

financial aid purposes and that was not the original intent hence the cancellation. The New Brunswick Student Alliance along with their member institutions was flooded with concerns throughout the early days of the cancellation with no full warning, consultation, or discussions with the Department of Education before the date of effect. After many advocacy meetings during that summer with community stakeholders we had a discussion with the minister and spoke on the many testimonials of students and lack thereof financial support and upfront needs-based grants for students emerging from a pandemic. The government claimed to have created this program to directly fund students that needed employment insurance (E.I) and stated that E.I was being misused for financial support. Therefore, affecting the labor market and ultimately had to go. We hope that in the near future the government will recognize why programs like these have been used for financial support and that students need constant resources that will enable them to afford not only tuition but external costs that affect their ability to attend school. Currently, with inflation and the rising costs we have seen where many students cannot afford housing or even textbooks so having a means of financial support or increased financial assistance each year will assist in supplementing low wages and account for increased cost of living.

International Student Tuition Regulation

International Students continue to contribute to Canada's economy significantly.

Throughout the past 7 years we have seen where many advocacy groups speak out on the various issues international students face. Particularly with the lack of financial support whilst having no access to student loans or bursaries.

We identify that there has been a significant drop in the youth population in New Brunswick and Atlantic provinces in general, and thus growth in enrollments have been much lower than in the rest of the country. However, it is important to recognize it would remain low were it not for significant increases in international student enrollments. In 2020-2021, international enrolment accounted for 13% of university enrolment in New Brunswick⁴⁷.

New Brunswick is seeking to increase international enrolment within the province as part of Action 18 of the Population Growth Action Plan for New Brunswick. International students, along with newcomers add 168 million to the provincial budget annually⁴⁸. International students pay much higher tuition fees than domestic students, and thus seen as a way to offset stagnant government funding. St. Thomas University, Mount Allison University, and the University of New Brunswick all increase tuition fees between 3-5 percent. the Government of New Brunswick has expressed the desire to remain competitive within the international recruitment market. However, there is still a lack of resources and support for international students.

During the last 2 years, the NBSA has brought forward several policies on financial aid and regulation of tuition for international students. Much of these policies have been met with hesitation, the government is consistent in providing very little help to these students. One of our policies that met with some interest was based on giving international students

access to student loans with a term that would contract retention of International Students post-graduation. However, after pitching this policy in 2021, there was less noise about this investment once we emerged from the pandemic. In 2022, we asked for international tuition regulation from the university's administration. We were met with a lot of push back on this because universities currently rely on international students to suffice for the gap in funding. This was then directed to the government to include international students in their grant model. We continue to highlight the lack of a way forward or plan that directly provides equitable access to an affordable education for International Students. Our commitment to ensuring that international students are not left out of the conversation will continue into this new academic year, however we urge that the government starts to see that over-reliance on International Students for financial gain with no sustainable plan that will allow them resources or accommodations as they live in this country will make for an unattractive outcome and ultimately dismantle their plan of retention.

Our Recommendations are in line with the policies we have brought forward within the last years which focuses on some prediction of tuition over the span

of an international student education, capping these costs, and ensuring there is sources of financial aid in the forms of grants or loans to ensure equitable resources are provided in an event that an international student needs these aids. The latter recommendations will reassure international students that they are not just a means to an end but are valuable to our province and there is compassion when they choose to leave their countries and homes to study here in Canada.

Conclusion

The New Brunswick Students Alliance will continue to honor our mission to lead in effective advocacy informed by research and evidence-based policy, build relationships with decision-makers in order to advance the collective agenda of its members, collaborate with students and community groups to inform equity, diversity and inclusion through intersectional praxis, and provide opportunities for students to lead change through outreach and campaign. We hope that these next steps towards a sustainable sector and qualifying future will afford all our students a province and country that will lead in prioritizing the quality of life and education that is provided to us all.



Affordable Education in Alberta

Alexandra Ages,
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Introduction: Post-Secondary Beginnings

Alberta has a longstanding history of educational exceptionalism, coupled with waves of reduced funding due to the volatility of oil prices. These fluctuating investments into higher education have had dramatic impacts on access to post-secondary, most notably for lower-income students. Despite the province's early history of investing in education and creating an equitable system for all potential students, recent policy decisions have created a higher education system that is particularly inaccessible to those of low-income backgrounds. However, there are stabilizing measures that can be taken to support long-term post-secondary accessibility.

Historically, the province of Alberta has invested heavily in post-secondary education, prioritizing universities, colleges, and polytechnics as key forms of provincial infrastructure. Establishing a non-denominational public university was of great importance to Alberta, with the University of Alberta officially opening for classes in 1908, just three years after Alberta officially became a province. By the 1960's, Alberta had established a robust higher education sector, with the University of Calgary being founded in 1966, and Athabasca University, the first Canadian university oriented around a distance-education model, being created in 1970⁴⁹. Up until the late 1970's, Alberta had the lowest tuition rates in Canada⁵⁰, when coupled with the province's burgeoning robust college to university transition structure, meant that Alberta's history within this period is one of comparatively equitable access to higher education. Affordability is a key element to accessibility, and for much of Alberta's history of higher

education, post-secondary education has been significantly more accessible to lower-income students within the province than in other parts of Canada.

Alberta's Rollercoaster of Post-Secondary Affordability

Throughout Alberta's history of advanced education, there has been significant variability in support for access to post-secondary due to variable oil revenues. With this in mind, lower-income students in particular have experienced dramatic shifts in access to higher education. Starting in the mid-1990's, Alberta entered a period of significant cuts to various public services, which, when coupled with policies allowing universities to dramatically increase fees⁵¹, meant that Alberta's post-secondary system rapidly became unaffordable to many students. Student leaders of the early 2000s were highly attuned to the growing crisis in access to education, noting that the students most at risk of falling through the cracks were those coming from lower-income backgrounds⁵². These concerns reflected the increasing accessibility issues of Alberta's post-secondary system, which by the early 2000's, was effectively working to systematically exclude lower-income students via increasingly unaffordable tuition rates. However, a booming oil industry resulted in another rapid shift of provincial policies, this time in a way that served to substantially benefit students who would otherwise struggle to afford higher education.

From 2004 to 2009, the annual government investment into post-secondary virtually doubled⁵³. This time period also marked an increase in the number of pub-

lic universities within Alberta as a whole, with two institutions, Grant MacEwan and Mount Royal, converting from colleges to universities in 2009⁵⁴. Alberta was once again one of the most affordable jurisdictions within Canada in which to obtain a university education, and was also gaining recognition for the overall quality of education offered. According to commentator Alex Usher⁵⁵:

"It has maybe the country's best resourced college system, and certainly two of the most impressive technical institutes. It has two universities in the world top-200, something very few jurisdictions of its size can say (on a per-capita basis, only Massachusetts, Switzerland and the Netherlands can top it.)"

Unfortunately, however, Alberta's well-funded higher education system would be once again impacted heavily by funding cuts, particularly in the wake of increasingly low oil revenues. From 2019 onwards, Alberta's institutions experienced increasingly drastic cuts to their funding, with some institutions being far more impacted by others. Alberta's oldest institution, the University of Alberta, had its funding base decreased by nearly 20% from 2019 to 2021, while the University of Calgary experienced a 12% cut⁵⁶. Though these funding shifts have undoubtedly impacted research capabilities and operational capacities, the direct impact of all has been that felt by students, who are facing increasingly unaffordable tuition rates. By 2021, Statistics Canada was reporting that Alberta was experiencing the highest tuition increases across all of Canada⁵⁷. Though still not the highest tuition in Canada overall,

Alberta's average tuition rate of \$7,803 in the 2020/2021 year now puts the province above the overall Canadian average of \$7,525⁵⁸.

Student Financial Aid and Affordability in Alberta


Beyond just tuition rates, another key element of affordability is access to grants and other forms of non-repayable student aid. In Canada as a whole, the student aid system is quite complex, with the Canada Student Financial Assistance Program serving as a form of 'base' funding for most provinces and territories, which then effectively 'top up' the federal funding to students with their own respective systems of student loans, grants, bursaries, and other funding. Notably, Alberta has a significant discrepancy in the forms of student aid offered, prioritizing investment into student loans, which must be repaid later on, thus creating a significant barrier to low-income students who do not want to accrue substantial student debt in order to attend post-secondary. During the 2022/2023 year, Alberta allocated \$980 million for student loans, compared to \$168 million for student aid through scholarships, grants and awards *combined*.⁵⁹ While it is difficult to compare provincial student aid systems without all provinces publicly showcasing their respective investments, it's telling that while the national debt average at graduation from an undergraduate degree is \$28,000, Alberta averages \$31,000⁶⁰. Similarly, while 45% of Canadian graduates had debt averaging over \$25,000 upon graduation, in Alberta, 52% of graduates had over \$25,000 in debt upon concluding their bachelor's degree. These statistics indicate that Albertan students are more likely to turn to loans to finance their education, in lieu of non-repayable student aid. What these numbers don't tell us, however, is how many Albertans choose to

not pursue post-secondary at all due to the high cost.

Beyond looking at the access to post-secondary education for potential students from a lower-income background, it's also worth noting the myriad of issues currently facing the students already attending post-secondary within Alberta. Because of how rapidly policies around post-secondary have shifted from 2019 onwards, coupled with the current cost of living crisis across Canada, many students who are presently attending Albertan universities are facing dire issues related to affordability. In one study at the University of Alberta, over 30% of students noted that they had skipped meals within the past month because they could not afford to eat⁶¹. This mirrors the data and anecdotes from post-secondaries across the province on the increasing need for emergency food support.⁶²

Recommendations

With a post-secondary system that ebbs and flows precariously based on oil revenues, leading to similarly precarious affordability for students, it's unfortunately unsurprising that for many Albertans, higher education is not seen as a viable option. However, investments into key areas affiliated with higher education would dramatically impact this issue. First and foremost, increased investments into needs-based bursaries for low-income students, instead of primarily funding loans, would support up-front funding for those who need it most.⁶³ Similarly, increasing access to post-secondary food security supports, such as campus food banks, would reduce the dire issues of food insecurity among students. Addressing funding volatility by ensuring investments into post-secondary are made with long-term considerations in mind, and perhaps ensuring that there



are standing funding allocations that are created when oil prices are high, to ensure there remains revenue available for educational infrastructure when prices fall, is another realm for policymakers to consider. Lastly, creating targeted supports for students who are both low-income and come from other marginalized identities, such as investing in digital infrastructure for those living on reserves, would ensure increased access to education among key population groups⁶⁴.

Though recent years have been particularly bleak for low-income students in Alberta, there have already been indications that a change of course is starting to take place. In February of 2023, new affordability measures were announced, including a 2% cap on tuition, which will be implemented during the 2024/2025 year, as well as an extension to the grace period for student loans. The government has also increased funding for the Alberta Student Grant to \$475 per month and has altered the Repayment Assistance Plan to support low-income graduates with student loans⁶⁵. All of this is admittedly a highly welcome policy shift, but still falls far short of current student needs.

Conclusion

Alberta has demonstrated a strong historical precedent for both well-funded and affordable post-secondary education, showcasing that it absolutely is within the province's capabilities to prioritize higher education as a key form of socie-

tal infrastructure. While very recent policy announcements have shown more willingness to support affordable post-secondary, substantially more investment is needed. We are losing our young people rapidly, with increasing numbers of youth leaving the province entirely⁶⁶. With oil revenues on the rise, now more than ever, it makes sense for Alberta to go back to its roots and invest in post-secondary education. By prioritizing education as a key form of infrastructure, our province can ensure that young Albertans of all backgrounds have the opportunity to access high-quality education.

Revitalizing Nova Scotia's Postsecondary Landscape

Lydia Houck,
President 2022-2023
Students Nova Scotia

With 10 universities and nearly 50,000 university students province-wide, postsecondary education is a key driver in Nova Scotia. Indeed, higher education accounts for \$886 million in annual export revenue and over 75% of provincial research and development in the province (in contrast with a federal average of 38%). The individual earnings and employment benefits associated with a higher education are especially impactful for Nova Scotians, who face the second lowest median income and one of the highest child poverty rates in the country. Further, universities are critical to the province's goal of doubling the population by 2060 through youth attraction & retention, with students from outside Nova Scotia constituting over half of current enrolment.

However, Nova Scotia's postsecondary sector continues to face numerous threats to long term sustainability, due in large part to the evolving ratio of government contributions to universities. In the late 1980s, government contributions accounted for 80% of institutional revenue; this ratio decreased to 50% by the early 2000s and decreased further to approximately 30% in the 2020s. This evolution has only furthered increases in student costs. Despite the Nova Scotia Tuition Bursary's creation in 2011 to "bring Nova Scotia tuition in line with the national average", the province continues to have the highest domestic tuition in the country, posing significant implications for the affordability and accessibility of a university education in Nova Scotia.

The primary document governing the relationship between the Nova Scotia government and Nova Scotia universities is the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

First implemented in 2005, the MOU dictates university funding, tuition policy, and numerous other priorities across domains including student success, innovation, and accessibility. The current iteration of the MOU, expiring in 2024, created designated funding for priorities including mental health and sexual violence; however, it capped annual increases to operating grants at 1% annually, equating to a proportional decrease in government contributions year-over-year.

In 2015, the government introduced the University Accountability and Sustainability Act, which attempted to address the numerous institutions who had sought out and received one-time, emergency government funding over the years. This act sought to provide increased institutional accountability and cost control, allowing universities to apply for additional funding in times of serious financial distress if certain conditions were met. Even with these increasing contributions from students, most universities across the provinces continue to face severe financial challenges.

A “windfall/cutback” approach to funding is not a long-term solution, providing no year-over-year stability or predictability. In comparison, if university grants were increased at a faster rate or at a rate more reflective of the evolving economic context in which these universities exist, institutions would not have to incur additional debt and interest and would be able to better budget these funds to avoid similar situations in the future.

Although the introduction of the Accountability Act sought to encourage institutions to avoid requiring these additional grants and forgiveness, it remains clear that many institutions continue to face instability that

is only confounded by continuously increasing labour costs and decreasing enrolment.

In contrast, adequate and consistent university funding improves sector sustainability, lessening institutional reliance upon (often unpredictable) income from students in the form of tuition and other fees. It further allows universities to plan for the long term, increasing educational quality while minimizing affordability barriers to access. Similarly, operating grant increases are the primary way in which the government holds institutions accountable to the outcomes of the MOU. Though the current iteration includes clauses that would allow the government to withhold funding if its criteria are not met, these measures have never been used. It is clear that the low and - proportionally decreasing - 1% of university revenue is limiting government capacity to use these mechanisms to enforce the MOU, and its benefits for students. As such, modernized university funding not only enhances accessibility & quality but strengthens sector accountability as a whole.

As government funding to universities stagnates, institutions must increasingly rely upon funding from students - who are, by and large, the single largest stakeholder at almost every Nova Scotia university. Despite the cap of 3% for Nova Scotian student tuition in the current MOU, domestic tuition remains 36% above the national average - the highest in the country.

Similarly, tuition regulation measures fail to include out-of-province or international students. Currently, out of province and international students comprise over 50% of the student body, with international enrolment growing by over 7% since 2013.

In contrast, domestic enrolment (both in province and out of province) has remained relatively stagnant over the same time period. However, this growth cannot be relied on as the sole source of institutional revenue growth long term, due in part to the unpredictability of long-term enrolment trends. A welcome measure implemented within other jurisdictions has seen the creation of an international cohort tuition model, which would allow for financial predictability of an international student’s postsecondary education in Nova Scotia.

Beyond tuition predictability, a barrier to international recruitment and retention remains the lack of best practices for international student support across the province. Students Nova Scotia has previously advocated for the creation of an International Education Standard or Strategy, which would mirror existing frameworks in identifying shared principles and goals for international support. These standards would incorporate pre-arrival supports, on-campus capacity, and employment/immigration resources post-graduation.

Coupled with inflationary pressures, limited funding has also exacerbated deferred maintenance needs across the province. Recent estimates place total deferred maintenance costs for Nova Scotia universities at close to \$1 billion, with further expenditures to upgrade academic accessibility. To ensure compliance with Accessibility Act standards for education and built infrastructure by 2030, the province and universities must accommodate accessibility requirements and diverse student needs. As classrooms, labs, libraries, and other facilities fall increasingly into disrepair and educational quality and student success is negatively impacted, it becomes

increasingly pressing that accessibility is incorporated within the 2025 MOU.

As discussions begin for MOU 2025, we have a unique opportunity to re-envision postsecondary education in the province and center quality of education and student success. By increasing operating grants by 5% annually, we ensure universities have the financial resources to maintain a high-quality academic experience without passing costs off to students. By regulating domestic tuition at 1%, we renew efforts to bring domestic tuition in line with national averages, prioritizing access, and affordability for Canadian youth.

Furthermore, there is an opportunity to strengthen Nova Scotia’s reputation as an international student destination by implementing a publicly promoted cohort system of international tuition and developing cross-sectoral standards and principles for international support before, during and after study. These supports include resourced commitments for consistent admissions, recruitment, and on-campus supports such as staffing, language fluency, wellbeing, and work-integrated learning, as well as post-graduation standards for labour force attachment and immigration.

Finally, the MOU provides a unique opportunity for Nova Scotia to formalize its commitment to achieving the Accessibility Act standards by 2030, through the creation of an annual accessibility fund for built and academic accessibility that prioritizes quality of education.

Financial Compensation for Internships to Enhance the Value of Interns' work

Samy-Jane Tremblay,
Présidente 2022-2023
Union étudiante du Québec

With the arrival of the Perspective Québec program, the Intern Perseverance and Success Scholarships has been turned upside down. The UEQ continues to call for remuneration for interns and proposes two solutions to better support the student intern population: increasing the bursary awarded during the internship session and funding more interns.

On March 30, 2023, Parti Québécois deputy Pascal Bérubé tabled a motion in the National Assembly, which was adopted unanimously. The motion called for recognition of the status of salaried employee for student interns in the public sector.⁶⁷

Even today, a number of inequities persist for interns, who still receive no form of financial compensation for their internships. In particular, interns in the public, parapublic and community sectors, have less frequent access to financial compensation. What's more, the programs whose internships are still unpaid are linked to jobs traditionally held by people who identify as women.

In 2019, following the Financial Compensation of Internships, a campaign led by the UEQ and the Fédération étudiante collégiale du Québec, the Minister of Education and Higher Education, Jean-François Roberge, announced the establishment of the Intern Perseverance and Success Scholarships, which aims to financially compensate some 17,000 interns. At university level, nine programs of study are targeted, with bursary amounts ranging from \$2,500 to \$4,000⁶⁸.

Table 1: list of programs of study eligible for the intern perseverance and success scholarships when it was created, and bursary amount

| | |
|---|----------|
| Master's degree in Special Education | 2 500 \$ |
| Master's degree in Communication Sciences and Disorders – Speech-Language Pathology | 2 600 \$ |
| Master's degree in Psychoeducation | 2 700 \$ |
| Bachelors degree in Social Work | 2 700 \$ |
| Masters degree in Social Work | 2 700 \$ |
| Bachelor degree of Science in Nursing | 2 800 \$ |
| Bachelor degree in Education | 3 900 \$ |
| Qualifying Master's degree in Education | 3 900 \$ |
| Bachelor's degree in Midwifery | 4 000 \$ |

Arrival of the Québec perspective scholarship program

In November of 2021, the Quebec government announced the Québec Perspective incentive bursary program, which “aims to increase the number of qualified people in essential public services or in strategic fields for the economy where there is a labour shortage⁶⁹”. At university level, each person enrolled in a qualifying program receives \$2,500 per successful full-time session, up to a maximum of \$20,000 for a four-year program.

Several programs of study whose final internship was then compensated through the Intern Perseverance and Success Scholarships have found themselves in Québec Perspective because the two programs are not cumulative. This is the case for the Bachelor of Science in Nursing, the Bachelor and Master of Social Work and the vast majority of Bachelor of Education degrees.

Issues resolved for the fall 2022

The transition between the two scholarship programs created several problems. Prior to discussions between the Ministry of Higher Education and the UEQ, students completing their program of study with a final internship in fall 2022 were penalized because they received the Québec Perspective scholarship, which is lower than the bursary for the Intern Perseverance and Success Scholarships. Thanks to the work done by the UEQ, the Ministry of Higher Education announced that the bursary from the Intern Perseverance and Success Scholarships would be awarded to those completing their internship studies in the fall of 2022.

Secondly, people completing their program of study in the winter of 2023 who had an internship session and another part-time session (in fall 2022 or winter 2023) were also penalized because they received only one payment from Québec Perspective. Once again, the UEQ's representation led to a positive outcome: these individuals received a scholarship from the Intern Perseverance and Success Scholarships.

Although solutions have been found for the implementation of Québec Perspective, other issues remain. The UEQ is therefore continuing its representation on the subject and is proposing two courses of action to help trainees who do not have adequate financial support to meet their needs.

Increase the amount offered during the internship session

The objectives of the two scholarship programs are quite different. The Intern Perseverance and Success Scholarship is designed to provide compensation to interns during their final internship, while the Québec Perspective program is designed to attract people to educational programs leading to occupations where there is a shortage of manpower.

And yet, the Ministry of Higher Education doesn't seem to know the difference, since it doesn't allow the two scholarship programs to be combined.

Receiving a \$2,500 scholarship per session as part of the Québec Perspective does not replace the internship scholarship, nor does it recognize the work done by interns. Knowing that financial needs are greater during the final internship session, the UEQ believes that the amount received during the internship session should be increased to offer the same amount as that offered by the Intern Perseverance and Success Scholarship.

Comparing the amount of the Intern Perseverance and Success Scholarship to the Québec Perspective scholarship, there is a shortfall of \$200 in social work, \$300 in nursing and \$1,400 in education. In order to best support the student population during the final internship in social work, nursing and education, and to attract and retain students in these fields affected by labour shortages, an investment of at least \$5.7 million is required to increase the amount offered during the internship session.

Improving the intern perseverance and success scholarship program

Other programs of study that meet the criteria seem to have been omitted from the Intern Perseverance and Success Scholarship Program, in particular physiotherapy, occupational therapy, audiology, and sexology. In a context of widespread labour shortages, it is becoming vital to attract and retain people in these fields. To recognize the work done by interns with increased needs during their internship session, final internships in these programs should be financially compensated. This investment could also help avoid an exodus to the private sector, where financial compensation is more often offered to interns.

The UEQ has recorded the number of people admitted annually to physiotherapy, occupational therapy, audiology and sexology programs at all Quebec universities.

Table 2: number of people admitted annually to physiotherapy, occupational therapy, audiology and sexology at quebec university

| | |
|----------------------|------------|
| Physiotherapy | 327 people |
| Occupational Therapy | 350 people |
| Audiology | 65 people |
| Sexology | 150 people |

Considering that 892 people are admitted to the four targeted programs of study each year, and that a scholarship can be worth up to \$4,000 under the Intern Perseverance and Success Scholarship, an investment of \$3.57 million would be required to fund the final internships of future professionals in physiotherapy, occupational therapy, audiology and sexology. In addition, it would be essential for the Ministry of Higher Education to adjust the amounts offered under this scholarship program, which have remained the same since 2019. In the current inflationary context, the UEQ believes that the amounts should be increased by at least 14% so that they keep pace with the Consumer Price Index since 2019⁷⁰.

It's the government's responsibility to act

By implementing the two proposed measures, the Quebec government would be doing more to support the student intern community. Against a backdrop of inflation and labour shortages, it's more than ever the time to act on this issue. The unanimous adoption of Pascal Bérubé's motion on March 30 is a step in the right direction. The steps taken by the Minister of Higher Education, Pascale Déry, to implement this motion will be a determining factor for thousands of students.

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