

# Strengthening our knowledge advantage

# Submission to the Budget 2019 Consultations

August 2018

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#### **Recommendation 1**

Develop and fund a national strategy for post-secondary education, to ensure Canada's universities and colleges can fulfill their mission to provide high quality education, produce important scholarship and research, and serve their communities.

#### **Recommendation 2**

Invest in early career researchers and faculty renewal.

#### **Recommendation 3**

Recognize the inherent and Treaty rights of Indigenous peoples to education and substantially increase federal support for First Nations, Inuit and Métis students.

## Introduction

The Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) is the national voice for academic staff. CAUT represents more than 70,000 teachers, librarians, researchers, general staff and other academic professionals in 122 post-secondary institutions across the country. CAUT works actively in the public interest to improve the quality and accessibility of post-secondary education in Canada. We fight for fair working conditions, compensation and benefits that foster quality teaching and innovative research while advancing equity and human rights within our profession.

With our members on the front lines of teaching and research across the country, we are uniquely placed as active participants and keen observers of Canada's post-secondary education system to bring an informed assessment of what it needs to truly flourish. Our members care deeply about making the system the very best it can be, and are strongly invested in shepherding Canada's future leaders.

As such, CAUT welcomes the opportunity to participate in the 2019 Federal Budget consultations. Our submission makes the following recommendations:

1. Develop and fund a national strategy for post-secondary education, to ensure Canada's universities and colleges can fulfill their mission to provide high quality education, produce important scholarship and research, and serve their communities.
2. Invest in early career researchers and faculty renewal.
3. Recognize the inherent and Treaty rights of Indigenous peoples to education and substantially increase federal support for First Nations, Inuit and Métis students.

### 1. Sustain our knowledge advantage

Post-secondary education (PSE) is a pillar of Canada's learning<sup>1</sup> and knowledge<sup>2</sup> infrastructure. It is key to bettering the lives of all Canadians as benefits accrue to individuals and society as a whole.<sup>3</sup>

The federal government has recently made some strategic investments in the post-secondary education system, including: historic increases in science and research; funding to modernize labs and classrooms;

enhanced affordability through the Canada Student Loan and Grants Program; and improved access, particularly for working Canadians.

While these are much needed investments, the PSE system itself remains under strain. Due to funding constraints, underemployment and precarious work in the sector are on the rise. Contract academic staff routinely lack the institutional supports needed to do their job, and since they are compensated only for teaching, their research talent remains untapped. Costs of education for students and families are outstripping the rate of inflation, and student- faculty ratios are increasing. There is little room for growth to support the future training needs of the labour force resulting from rapid technological change. The government's Advisory Council on Economic Growth argues that for adult re-skilling alone, the PSE system will require a \$3 billion investment in the next decade or so.<sup>4</sup>

The truth is in the numbers:<sup>5</sup>

- Direct government funding of PSE is down 5.1%.
- Tuition and fees as a percentage of revenue is up 4.7%.
- Assistant professor positions declined by 18.5% from 2010-11 to 2016-17.
- Number of university teachers working part time, part year increased by 79% from 2005- 2015.
- 46% of graduates have student loan debt.
- Average debt at graduation is \$22,276.
- Student-faculty ratio is increasing at 25 of Canada's largest universities — an average of 23% more students per full-time faculty member from 2001-2002 to 2016-17.
- Government funding per student declined by 18% between 2009-10 to 2016-17.

The last top-up of federal investment for core PSE funding occurred in 2007, when the government enhanced the Canada Social Transfer by \$800 million. It is time for the federal government to become a stronger partner for PSE to foster a high quality, affordable, and accessible system for all. A bolder vision is needed to ensure the sustainability of Canada's post-secondary education system in order to promote the economic, social and cultural success of our country.

Greater federal leadership and a dedicated, accountable PSE investment will also support and sustain successful outcomes of the recent federal re-investment in basic research (\$1.6 billion over 5 years), modernizing facilities (\$2 billion over 3 years), student assistance (\$113 million over 5 years), and lifelong learning (\$300 million over 3 years).

**Recommendation:** Work with the Council of Ministers of Education to develop, implement, and fund a national strategy for post-secondary education to address system funding and affordability challenges.<sup>6</sup>

## 2. Invest in early career researchers & faculty renewal

The federal government made a significant and much welcomed down payment to strengthen Canada's research capacities in Budget 2018. The investment of \$1.67 billion over five years followed the Advisory Panel on Federal Support for Fundamental Science's final report that provided a compelling case for a substantial increase to base funding of the federal granting councils. The Advisory Panel noted support for fundamental research is among the highest-yield investments in Canada's future that any government could make, "given global competition, the current conditions in the ecosystem, the role of research in underpinning innovation and educating innovators, and the need for research to inform evidence-based policy-making". Budget 2018's investments in discovery research will do much to boost our scientific capacity to make real advances in knowledge and contribute to a better life for all.



**Research funders, governments & academics themselves must join forces as part of a broader effort at system renewal & support ... Our PhD graduates deserve nothing less, & the future of the research enterprise in Canada may well depend on it.**

— Ted Hewitt  
President of the Social Sciences and  
Humanities Research Council<sup>7</sup>

Budget 2018 also committed the government to undertake work over the next year to determine how to better support the next generation of researchers, through scholarships and fellowships. This follows on the Advisory Panel's recommendation that "the development and retention of outstanding students, trainees and young researchers must be at the top of any priority list for the national research enterprise."

**Recommendation:** Develop a comprehensive approach to supporting the recruitment and retention of early career researchers.

- Create more graduate scholarships and enhance their value. The last increase to the number of Canada Graduate Scholarships occurred in 2007. Despite major increases in graduate enrolments, the value and number of graduate awards has not changed since 2003. The government should invest at the level recommended by the Advisory Panel: a total base increase of \$140 million per year to be phased in over four years.
- Expand eligibility of the Canada Student Grants Program to include graduate students, at an estimated cost of \$25 million per year.
- Increase assistantships by developing a plan to reach the level of investment in Investigator-Led Project Funding (see Table 1) recommended by the Advisory Panel. Federal commitments to fundamental science enhance learning at the undergraduate, graduate, doctoral, and postdoctoral levels as investigators use the grants to support student researchers through assistantships.
- Enhance federal funding for the PSE system to support faculty renewal as recommended above. One of three faculty members is estimated to be on a short-term contract — where few are even eligible to apply to the granting councils. Trained as researchers and scientists, these precarious academics currently represent an untapped potential to boost scientific research. A stronger federal partner is needed to increase funding and work with the provinces and territories to ensure faculty renewal, including the conversion of precarious positions into permanent academic jobs with the opportunity to engage in research and service.

**Table 1**  
**Investigator-Led Project Funding**

	Advisory Panel Recommendation	Budget 2018	Funding Gap (%)
2018-19	155	150	97%
2019-20	310	200	65%
2020-21	465	250	54%
2021-22	485	300	62%
Ongoing	485	300	62%

Supporting faculty renewal by opening up opportunities for contract academic staff who wish to pursue a permanent academic career can also assist in achieving the equity and diversity eluding academia. The 2016 Census data confirms that women and other marginalized groups are over-represented in part-time or part-year positions.<sup>8</sup>

### 3. Invest in Indigenous education

CAUT welcomed the Budget 2017 increases to Indigenous education and its commitment to undertake a comprehensive and collaborative review with Indigenous partners to inform all current federal programs that support Indigenous students. The review outcomes will hopefully guide a path to the fulfillment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action #11 to end the backlog of First Nations learners seeking PSE, and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Article 14 which highlights the rights of Indigenous peoples to establish and control their own educational systems.

CAUT shares the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) concerns about the current approach of the Post-Secondary Student Support Program, outlined in its Interim Report 2018 for the First Nations PSE Review, including:

- The program objective of “employability” is limited, and fails to address the broader value of learning, the principle of nation-building, the need for human resources development, and the implementation of Treaty and Inherent rights;

- The program outcomes do not deal with the need to support access, retention, and successful completion; and
- Eligibility of programs, institutions, expenditures, and students in the current guidelines are often outdated and are not reflective of the current or emerging realities of the post-secondary system, or not consistent with First Nations' needs.

It is also clear from the AFN Interim Report that there is a substantive funding shortfall if we are to close the gap in educational and economic attainment that exists between First Nations peoples and non-Indigenous Canadians. This shortfall is even bigger when also taking into account the rights and needs of Inuit and Métis peoples.

For First Nations people alone, federal support currently only extends to one in five eligible First Nations learners.

**Recommendation:** Substantially increase federal support for First Nations, Inuit and Métis learners to access and succeed in PSE, and take a nation-to-nation approach to these investments.

1. Advisory Panel on Economic Growth. (2017). *Learning Nation: Equipping Canada's Workforce with Skills for the Future*.
2. Advisory Panel on Federal Support for Fundamental Research. (2017). *Investing in Canada's Future: Strengthening the Foundations of Canadian Research*.
3. Madore, Odette. (1992). *Post-Secondary Education: An Imperative for Canada's Future*. Library of Parliament.
4. Ibid 1.
5. Sources: Department of Finance Canada, Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer 2018, Statistics Canada Census 2006, Statistics Canada Census 2016, Statistics Canada Postsecondary Student Information System (PSIS), Statistics Canada Universities and Colleges Academic Staff System (UCASS).
6. As recommended by the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology in its 2011 report, *Opening the Door: Reducing Barriers to Post-Secondary Education in Canada*.
7. Hewitt, Ted. (2017). Underemployment of PhDs hurts research. *The Chronicle Herald*.
8. Canadian Association of University Teachers. (2018). *Underrepresented and Underpaid: Diversity and Equity among Canada's Post-Secondary Education Teachers*.