

# **Up-to-the-task : Academic & research staff are ready to solve Canada's emerging problems**

## **Submission to the Pre-Budget Consultations in Advance of the 2020 Budget**

**August 2019**

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## Submission to the Pre-Budget Consultations in Advance of the 2020 Budget

The Canadian Association of University Teachers is pleased to participate in the 2020 Federal Budget consultations. Our recommendations are as follows:

### **Recommendation 1**

Expand science and research capacity to create new knowledge needed in a rapidly changing world.

- Invest more in science and research. Canada is 40-45 percent short of recommended funding for basic research.
- Work with the provinces and institutions to address the underlying issues contributing to underemployment of scientists and researchers at universities and colleges through enhanced federal funding for post-secondary education (PSE) and greater support for targeted equity initiatives. At least one third of researchers working at Canada's post-secondary institutions today are not supported to conduct research because they are employed on short-term teaching-only contracts. Additionally, the diversity that we need to advance research will only be achieved by hiring more diverse researchers into full academic jobs.

### **Recommendation 2**

Tackle inequality in access to education and expand the Canada Student Grants program. All Canadians deserve an education.

- Recognize the inherent and Treaty rights of Indigenous peoples to education and substantially increase federal support for Indigenous students in order to close the education gap.
- Expand the Canada Student Grants program.
- Work with the provinces on a national strategy to increase access to PSE.

### **Recommendation 3**

Close data gaps and improve access to government data to help identify issues and better shape solutions.

- Maintain and grow important Statistics Canada work along with the agency's operating budget.
- Adopt open-data initiatives across government and encourage the standardization of data across provinces, municipalities and sectors.

## Introduction

The Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) is the national voice of academic staff. CAUT represents more than 72,000 teachers, librarians, researchers, general staff and other academic professionals in 125 Canadian post-secondary institutions including universities, colleges and polytechnics. CAUT works in the public interest to improve the quality and accessibility of Canada’s post-secondary education. We fight for fair working conditions, compensation and benefits that foster teaching and research while advancing equity and human rights within our profession.

Like other Canadians, CAUT members are alarmed by the existential threat that climate change represents to the world. We believe leadership from Canadian governments is crucial along with meaningful changes from institutions and individual efforts. The PSE sector has a critical role to play in mitigating and adapting to climate change through research and teaching.

The majority of Canadians believe that universities and colleges will help solve climate change and 95 percent agree that research conducted at post-secondary institutions helps solve problems Canada will face over the next decades.<sup>1</sup>

## 1. Expand science & research

### Increase research funding

Canadians need new knowledge and new ideas for a rapidly changing world. Basic research is critical to understanding the world so that innovative and much needed solutions can emerge. Investing more in science and research, across disciplines, must be part of Canada’s climate solution.

Recent government investments in science and research were much welcomed, but did not go far enough for us to fulfill our potential. The Advisory Panel on Federal Support for Fundamental Science’s final report, released in 2018, is an invaluable blueprint to ensure Canada is a world leader in research. We urge the federal government to return to the report of the Fundamental Science Review (FSR) and to meet the recommended funding targets.

1. Based on polling commissioned by CAUT and performed by Abacus Data in the spring of 2019.



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**Table 1**  
Investigator-Led Project Funding

	Advisory Panel Recommendation	Budget 2019	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%

\$ in millions of dollars

The funding shortfall for research and science is greater than above, as a result of the decision to phase out the National Centres of Excellence with no commitment to reallocate these funds to basic research.

In particular, CAUT would urge the government to: 1) increase the number of small and mid-size grant awards to better support early career researchers; and, 2) sustain large ongoing research projects, including climate research networks, by providing longer-term funding to ensure continuity of knowledge and skills and maintenance of facilities and datasets.

In order to further grow Canada’s research capacity, CAUT also recommends closing the gap in funding for fellowships and scholarships. Though announcements in Budget 2019 were welcome, they fall far below what the Advisory Panel recommended.

**Table 2**  
**Fellowships and Scholarships Funding**

	Advisory Panel Recommendation	Budget 2019	Funding Gap
2019-20	\$35	\$22.8	35%
2020-21	\$70	\$22.8	66%
2021-22	\$105	\$22.8	78%
2022-23	\$140	\$22.8	84%
2023-24	\$140	\$22.8	84%
Ongoing	\$140	\$26.5	81%

\$ in millions of dollars

Canada ranks only 26<sup>th</sup> among OECD countries for graduate degree attainment.<sup>2</sup> We need to bolster this pipeline to sustain the research and science capacity we need to face the future.

### Expand research capacity & address underrepresentation

One in three of Canada's researchers and scientists are working on short term precarious teaching-only contracts. The majority of contract academic staff (CAS) are not "happy moonlighters" but report wanting a permanent full-time academic job that recognizes research and service in addition to teaching.<sup>3</sup> The casualization of the academic workforce represents a tremendous under-utilization of talent. The precarious nature of this growing workforce makes it more difficult to recruit and retain young academics and researchers at a time when there is a growing need. The total number of faculty at the rank of assistant professor and below has decreased by 18.5 percent in the last decade, because of a lack of faculty renewal.

Fiscal constraints, however, make it challenging for institutions to create more full-time positions. Government leadership is needed to address the sector's chronic underfunding resulting in rising precarity.

Further, Indigenous and equity-seeking people are disproportionately represented among the underemployed in Canada's universities and colleges. Achieving an equitable, diverse and inclusive campus environment will lead to increased excellence, innovation, and impact student success.

We recommend the federal government develop a national strategy for post-secondary education with the provinces that sets targets for renewal of our research and scientific workforce.

We also recommend that the federal government deepen its support for initiatives to address systemic barriers facing Indigenous and equity-seeking academic staff.

## 2. Address education inequality

### Make PSE more affordable

Canada's highly educated population is a contributing factor to our thriving economy and democracy.

One out of two Canadians has attended a post-secondary institution, yet when polled, nearly all Canadians (93 percent) said they would have pursued post-secondary education after high school if they had not needed to pay tuition. This confirms that there is broad appreciation for the value of advanced education and that affordability is a barrier.<sup>4</sup>

The escalating costs of tuition and the rapidly changing world of work are putting post-secondary education out of reach for some and creating unsustainable household debt for others. Over 20 percent of bachelor degree holders graduate today with over \$25,000 in student debt – and by the time they pay that off, they will have paid significantly more for their education than their peers who could afford to pay up-front.

We recommend the federal government include affordability measures as part of a national strategy for

2. Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD), "Educational attainment and labour-force status: educational attainment of 25-64 year-olds" data extracted on 29 July 2019 from <https://stats.oecd.org/>.

3. CAUT report "Out of the Shadows: Experiences of Contract Academic Staff", September 2018.

4. Based on polling commissioned by CAUT and performed by Abacus Data in the spring of 2019.

post-secondary education. CAUT also recommends that the federal government convert the majority of its repayable loans to non-repayable grants. When this was done in the province of Ontario, albeit briefly, some 40 percent of students were reported to have benefitted from no tuition fees.<sup>5</sup>

### Close the Indigenous education gap

CAUT welcomed announcements in Budget 2019 for distinction-based funding of First Nations, Métis and Inuit students. The funding, however, falls far short of honouring inherent and Treaty rights. CAUT urges the government to continue the necessary work to fulfill the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Actions and to work with Indigenous governments to respect the United Nations' Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People's Article 14, highlighting the rights of Indigenous peoples to establish and control their own education systems.

## 3. Close data gaps & improve access to government data

Government data and science are vitally important to assist researchers to identify problems and find solutions. They are a necessity for evidence informed decision-making.

CAUT welcomed renewed investments in data collection, analysis and sharing at Statistics Canada, notably the return of the long-form census and the University and College Academic Staff System Survey. However, there remain large gaps in data. This includes information about the workforce, health, demographics, population, and education. Statistics Canada's work — a fundamental tool for policy development today and for building a brighter future — needs to be supported and funded at higher levels.

The federal government's leadership is needed to standardize data collection between all levels of governments and institutions (including universities and colleges).

Greater access to comparable data, including government science, will help improve our understanding of, among other things, climate change mitigation and adaptation. CAUT encourages the federal government to share government data and science using an open science approach with a central repository that is easy for researchers to access and use. Barriers to this data should be removed as much as possible. Scientific data that is funded by and pursued on behalf of the Canadian public and in the interest of Canadians should be available to the public and the greater scientific community.

## Conclusion

Post-secondary education changes lives and Canada for the better. Through teaching, research and service to the community, Canada's academic staff, scientists and researchers are key partners in addressing the climate emergency and other economic and social challenges. Canadians need a strong federal partner to work with the provinces to make sure that we have a sustainable research ecosystem, and affordable education for all.

5. CBC News "[40% of Ontario full-time post-secondary students granted free tuition, CBC analysis shows](#)" by Valérie Ouellet, February 4, 2019.