

# Education and Research – A Federal Opportunity for Recovery and Resilience

## Submission to the Pre-Budget Consultations in Advance of the 2022 Budget

August 2021

## Recommendation 1

That the government create a national post-secondary education strategy in cooperation with provinces and territories, and commit, in support of this strategy, an additional \$3 billion through transparent transfer payments to provinces and territories.

## Recommendation 2

That the government provide funding in the amount of \$20 million over 5 years, with \$4.3 million per year ongoing for a Federal Secretariat on Post-Secondary Education, Research and Training to bring governments, experts and stakeholders together to collaborate in designing and implementing a vision for public post-secondary education in Canada. The Secretariat will build capacity within the government and engage stakeholders to provide policy analysis in support of an affordable, accessible, and high-quality post-secondary system.

## Recommendation 3

That the government increase investments in basic science by \$600 million and commit an additional \$185 million to base funding per year ongoing, and increase graduate scholarships by \$350 million over four years, with \$140 million per year ongoing, to fully implement the recommendations to enhance investments to fundamental science and research in relation to the findings of the 2017 report of the Advisory Panel on Federal Support for Fundamental Science.

## Recommendation 4

That the government invest in making post-secondary education more affordable by permanently doubling the value of the student grant; moving to a 50:50 funding model for grants and loans; and, providing funding in the amount of \$8 million to the federal granting agencies to pilot a granting program to develop Open Education Resources.

## Recommendation 5

That the government increase funding in the amount of \$5 million to Statistics Canada to improve data collection and analysis on tuition, finances, salaries, equity and precarious work in public universities, colleges, and polytechnics.

## Recommendation 6

That the government provide funding in the amount of \$650 million annually to support closing the gap in Indigenous post-secondary educational attainment.

## Introduction

The Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) is the national voice for academic staff. CAUT represents more than 72,000 teachers, librarians, researchers, general staff, and other academic professionals in 125 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.

Universities, colleges, and polytechnics are essential to the preservation, dissemination, and advancement of knowledge for the benefit of all. Education and research will help Canadians face present and future challenges, whether climate crises, health and mental health matters, or shifting labour needs.

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 postsecondary education system. We bring an informed assessment of what it needs to better help drive Canada's post-pandemic social, environmental, and economic recovery agenda. Budget 2022 is a generational opportunity to create the new normal people want to see post-pandemic. Key to this will be strong public investment in post-secondary education. Strong federal leadership is needed now to improve affordability and access by reversing a decade of chronic public underfunding. We need strong federal leadership to develop a national vision for the post-secondary education, supported by predictable and sustainable funding.

Our submission makes the following recommendations:

### 1. Develop a national post-secondary education strategy

The federal government has demonstrated a willingness to show bold leadership in addressing national problems that are within provincial jurisdiction, such as childcare and the development of national standards for long-term care. The last federal top-up for post-secondary education through the

Canada Social Transfer was in 2008 and public funding now represents less than half of total university revenue in Canada. Public spending on post-secondary education in Canada has not kept pace with enrolment over the past several decades and this chronic underfunding creates a negative ripple effect on the post-secondary workforce, on student affordability and generational debt, and on Canada’s global ranking as a place for research and innovation. We need stronger federal leadership to work with the provinces and territories to define a plan for post-secondary to ensure it is high-quality, affordable, and accessible.

CAUT recommends the federal government work with provinces and territories to develop a national post-secondary education strategy by 2024 that lays out a vision for high-quality, affordable and accessible post-secondary education and research. The federal government should commit an additional \$3 billion to a dedicated post-secondary education transfer to the provinces with transparency and accountability mechanisms.

**2. Create a federal post-secondary education secretariat**

The federal government supports post-secondary education and research in myriad ways through programs and policies at a minimum of six different departments. Post-secondary education is both of national importance, and a provincial/territorial responsibility. Cross-jurisdictional dialogue with the provinces, territories, and sector stakeholders is needed to outline and act on a vision to ensure the sector thrives. As there is no dedicated entity at the federal level to coordinate issues affecting post-secondary education, stakeholder communication and consultation on sector policy is dispersed, disjointed, and often siloed.

CAUT recommends an investment of \$20 million over 5 years, starting in 2023-24, with \$4.3 million per year ongoing to establish and staff a Federal Secretariat on Post-Secondary Education, Research and Training. This centralised hub within the federal government will lead work on a national post-secondary education strategy, facilitate collaboration with the provinces and territories, Indigenous peoples and Indigenous governments, and experts and stakeholders, as well as to coordinate initiatives related to research and science, student assistance, innovation, and equity.

**3. Support basic research**

The pandemic has highlighted the critical importance of science and research, and a strong research community. It has had a negative impact on research in many areas, stalling or stopping vital inquiries. We need to accelerate science and research coming out of the pandemic. The increases to basic research funding in Budget 2018 made up for lost ground but did not close the entire gap, as identified by the 2017 final report of the Advisory Panel on Federal Support for Fundamental Science.

	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	Ongoing
Advisory Panel recommendation	155	310	465	485	485
Budget 2018 investment	150	200	250	300	300
Percentage of Panel recommendation funded	97%	65%	54%	62%	62%

*Total amounts are expressed in millions*

We urge the federal government to meet the Panel’s recommended funding targets. CAUT urges the government to immediately:

- 1) Increase funding to the granting councils by \$600 million, with \$185 million per year ongoing; and,
- 2) Increase number and value of grants by \$350 million over four years, with \$140 million per year ongoing, to better support early career researchers and offer much needed balance to the diversity of our research workforce where currently women and racialized researchers are underrepresented due to limited career options.

**4. Improve affordability for students**

The federal government has taken welcomed steps to improve student affordability and support students through the pandemic. The emergency measures of doubling the Canada Student Grants should be made permanent, and federal support needs to be re-balanced. It is heavily weighted towards loans: for every \$1 in grants that the federal government disburses, they loan \$2 that must be repaid. A more equitable disbursement

in the short run would be for the government to move toward a 50:50 grants and loans model.

Removing barriers to accessing post-secondary education also includes supporting greater access to learning and training materials, such as textbooks and specialised software. Open Education Resources (OER)s are public domain or open license materials that permit free use and repurposing. These free course tools create an equal playing field that generate greater student success, particularly for students from low-income households. CAUT recommends that the government create a pilot fund through the federal granting agencies of \$8 million for graduate students and faculty to develop OERs.

## 5. Collect better data on post-secondary education

Federal investments in research, innovation, student affordability, and commitments to equity and decent work are made with limited data on the sector. The federal government committed to piloting better data in 2016 on the academic workforce to include part-time workers and colleges. Additional funding is needed to close these and other data gaps such as on college tuition and finances in Canada and equity in the student population and workforce. These data gaps will support federal and provincial governments and a wide range of stakeholders with evidence to inform decisions in a range of policy areas.

CAUT proposes immediately increasing funding to Statistics Canada by \$5 million to close key data gaps on precarious work, access, affordability, quality, equity, mental health, and employment.

## 6. Invest in Indigenous education

Indigenous peoples have inherent and Treaty rights to education, including post-secondary education. The federal government must uphold this moral and legal responsibility to ensure First Nation, Inuit, and Metis students have access to education by eliminating the financial barriers that prevent their attending college or university. And yet, the legacy of colonialism persists in both the gaps in access and attainment of post-secondary education between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. Only 37% of people with Aboriginal identity aged 25-64 have a college diploma or university degree,

compared to overall attainment of 54% among Canadians within the same age bracket.<sup>1</sup>

Under the current federal programs, including the Post-Secondary Student Support Program, the Inuit Post-Secondary Education Strategy, Métis Nation Post-Secondary Education Strategy, and the University and College Entrance Preparation Program, funding is limited and not all students may be funded.

CAUT supports the recommendations of Indigenous representational organisations and Indigenous education stakeholders in calling on the federal government to immediately invest \$650 million annually to bridge the existing funding deficiencies needed to close the gap in Indigenous post-secondary educational attainment and access, as well as develop and expand culturally appropriate Indigenous post-secondary education systems and models.

<sup>1</sup> Statistics Canada. [Table 37-10-0099-01](#). (2016).