

# THE FEDERAL OPPORTUNITY

STRENGTHENING OUR KNOWLEDGE  
ADVANTAGE FOR 2020 AND BEYOND

 **CAUT**  
Canadian Association of  
University Teachers



A woman with short brown hair and glasses, wearing a teal button-down shirt, is smiling and gesturing with her right arm towards a group of people. The background is a bright, out-of-focus classroom or meeting room. In the foreground, the back of a person's head with curly brown hair is visible, looking towards the woman.

## WHO WE ARE

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.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:


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Post-secondary education (PSE) changes lives, strengthens the economy and is key to a bright future for all Canadians. Canada has an excellent system, respected internationally for producing world-class research and graduates, but the PSE sector is under considerable strain across the country.

Canada needs PSE leadership from Ottawa so that our universities and colleges provide quality, affordable and accessible education, today and in the future.

It is time for a shared long-term national strategy for post-secondary education and training in Canada.



“The very nature of post-secondary education makes it national in scope. [...] the federal government has a role in ensuring that the country has adequate supplies of highly qualified personnel, that there is some equality of opportunities for young Canadians regardless of where they live, and that there is development of the knowledge required for economic growth, prosperity and international competitiveness.”

*Post-Secondary Education: An Imperative for Canada's Future,*  
a report from the Library of Parliament

### **CAUT IS CALLING FOR FEDERAL LEADERSHIP TO STRENGTHEN PSE IN CANADA TO:**

- Work with the provinces and the PSE sector to develop a long-term national plan to address chronic underfunding;
- Expand Canada's research capacity through increased research funding, graduate scholarships and better working conditions for academic staff;
- Make post-secondary education more affordable and accessible for all;
- Support and promote decent work in the sector and a decrease in the sector's reliance on precarious contract jobs; and,
- Harness all available federal levers to ensure a high-quality and affordable post-secondary education system for all Canadians.



# WHY PSE?

Post-secondary education and research benefits all Canadians. Individual benefits spill over and help everyone, including those who do not attend PSE themselves, contributing to an enhanced quality of life, a stronger economy, and a robust democracy.

Countries with higher educated populations generally have:

- Improved standard of living, higher incomes, and increased tax revenue;
- Better health outcomes, longer life expectancies, and higher rates of self-reported happiness;
- Lower unemployment rates, improved resilience to economic downturn and reduced poverty;
- Higher rates of R&D activity, economic growth and stability; and,
- Higher rates of civic engagement and social cohesion, contributing to a healthier democracy.

Post-secondary education transforms lives and builds a better Canada. This is why CAUT is calling on federal leaders to strengthen post-secondary education.

“Nothing in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is more empowering, on a personal and collective level, than education.”

*Education for the 21st Century, UNESCO*





## BY THE NUMBERS: PSE FUNDING

**\$1.36**

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The economic value added to the Canadian economy for every \$1.00 invested by the government in higher education.

– Conference Board of Canada

**\$3  
BILLION**


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The amount of investment in PSE needed in the next decade for adult re-skilling alone.

– Advisory Council on  
Economic Growth

“Education leads to numerous benefits for the individual, for business, and for government. The expected returns on an investment in education take the form of higher earnings for the individual, increased productivity for business, higher taxes for government, and an improved standard of living for society as a whole”

*Post-Secondary Education: An Imperative for Canada's Future,*  
a report from the Library of Parliament



# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FEDERAL ACTIONS TO STRENGTHEN PSE

## **DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT A NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN CANADA**

- Canadians need a stronger federal partner for post-secondary education and research. The federal government must work with the provinces, and universities and colleges to improve affordability, access and quality. The last top-up to the federal social transfer to provinces to support the core operating costs of PSE was in 2008, and the federal Post-Secondary Institutions Strategic Investment Fund was a one-off. It is time to agree to a long-term solid plan for PSE.

## **GROW CANADA'S RESEARCH CAPACITY**

- Increase funding to investigator-led research projects and graduate scholarships to rates recommended by the Advisory Panel on Federal Support for Fundamental Science on Fundamental Research;
- Expand the New Frontiers in Research Fund to ensure a minimum 20% success rate;
- Increase the number of small and mid-size grants to better support early career researchers;
- Sustain large ongoing research projects by providing longer-term funding to ensure continuity of knowledge and skills and maintenance of facilities and datasets; and,
- Share government data and government science using an open science approach with a central repository that is easy for researchers to access and use. Removing barriers to government data should be done where possible.



### **MAKE POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION MORE AFFORDABLE FOR ALL AND EXPAND ACCESS:**

- Include affordability measures as part of a national strategy for post-secondary education that will reduce tuition costs, while maintaining operating funds;
- Convert the majority of repayable loans to non-repayable grants; and,
- Invest in Indigenous education.

### **PROMOTE EQUITY AND DECENT WORK:**

- Reduce the sector's reliance on precarious employment and increase the number of full-time permanent academic jobs through increased funding for PSE and a plan that insists on expanding and diversifying full-time faculty;
- Enhance employment equity and diversity using existing tools like the *Employment Equity Act* and the Federal Contractors Program;
- Promote an Early Childhood Education (ECE) to PSE system approach to lifelong learning with a national childcare program;
- Ratify the International Labour Organization's *Violence and Harassment Convention* (C190); and,
- Maintain and grow support for Statistics Canada.





# WHY PSE *NOW?*

Our post-secondary education system has served Canadians well but it is under strain. Canada is in danger of losing its ability to provide high quality, comprehensive higher education and research.

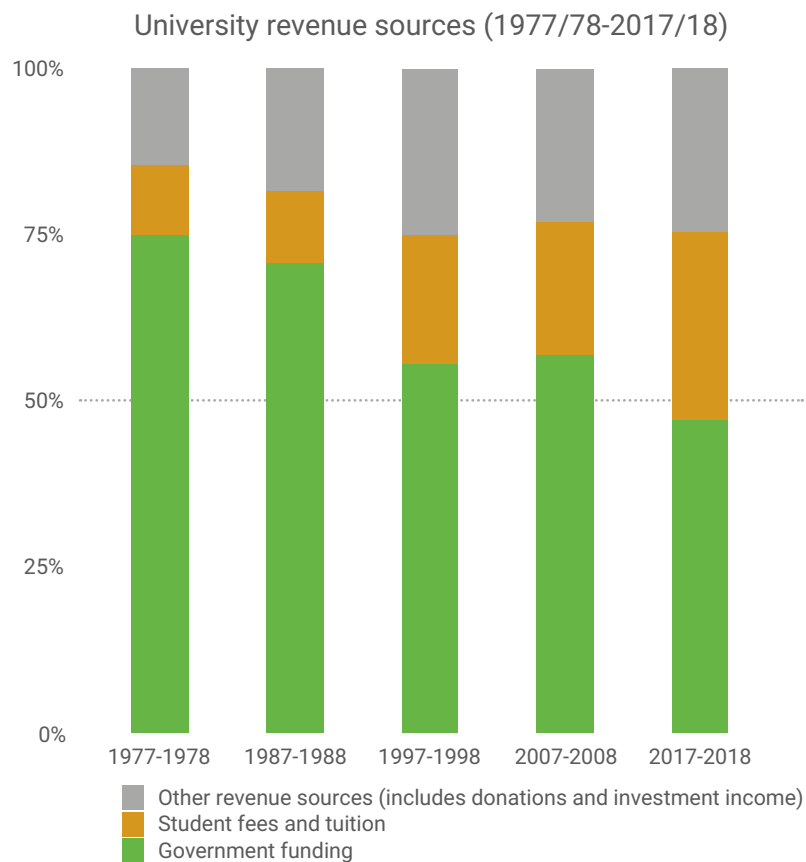
Over the past several decades, government spending on PSE has not kept pace with enrolment and now represents less than half of total university revenue. Students and their families are bearing an ever larger burden of the costs of higher education. Teachers, researchers and librarians are feeling the cuts and the academic mission of institutions is under threat.

Renewed federal leadership on PSE is needed to strengthen our research capacity, contain costs for students and their families, reduce education inequality and expand access.



“It’s time for the federal and provincial governments to work together to restore public funding so that universities can get back to working full-time on the academic mission.”

*Julia Wright, Dalhousie Faculty Association*





# CLOSE THE RESEARCH FUNDING GAP

Canadians need new knowledge and new ideas to improve our quality of life and to help us meet the critical challenges we face. The report from the Advisory Panel on Federal Support for Fundamental Science, released in 2017, provides the blueprint to ensure Canada is a world leader in research.

Recent government investments in science and research were welcomed by CAUT's members; however, there remains a shortfall of approximately 40% to reach the levels of funding needed to keep Canada competitive internationally. We urge the federal government to return to the report from the Fundamental Science Review and to meet the panel's recommended funding targets.

TABLE1

## INVESTIGATOR-LED PROJECT FUNDING

	ADVISORY PANEL RECOMMENDATION	BUDGET 2018	% FUNDED
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




# HARNESS RESEARCH TALENT

A large pool of Canadian research talent is languishing on the sidelines. At least one-third of faculty at Canadian universities and colleges are working in teaching-only contract positions.

The first rung of a permanent research position at Canadian universities is assistant professor, but the number of these positions has decreased by 18.5% in the last decade because of fiscal restraints and the budgeting priorities of administrators and governments. Instead of hiring people into tenure-track full-time positions, institutions are hiring contract academic staff, paying them only for time in the classroom, not in the labs or in the field.

Job insecurity and underemployment take a major toll, both on contract academic staff and on their permanently employed colleagues who have to take on more work as the ranks of full-time staff diminish. The increased reliance in the sector on contract academic staff also impacts students. Contractors do not supervise graduate work and are not available outside of the classroom to provide support or mentoring.

Further, Indigenous and equity-seeking people are disproportionately over-represented among the underemployed in Canada's universities and colleges and underrepresented among full-time permanent teachers. This isn't fair. It's also an indicator that Canadian research has room to grow to include more diverse ideas, approaches and perspectives by reducing reliance on short-term contract academic staff.




“The numbers in the older cohort [...] will fall over the next 10 to 15 years. We must ensure that Canada has built a pipeline of talent for the long haul.”

*Investing in Canada's Future: Strengthening the Foundations of Canadian Research,*  
a report from Canada's Fundamental Science Review

“The new generation is notably more diverse than its predecessors. Thus, these conditions are undermining not only the long-term growth and sustainability of research in Canada, but also the diversity of the research ecosystem.”

*Investing in Canada's Future: Strengthening the Foundations of Canadian Research,*  
a report from Canada's Fundamental Science Review



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

*Ted Hewitt, President of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council*

#### **IN THEIR OWN WORDS – CONTRACT ACADEMIC STAFF:**

“I have worked on a national and international research team for 10 years so I regularly lecture and contribute to international research. I regularly receive grants for projects and travel both nationally and regionally. My research is not supported by my university as I am a part-time faculty but instead by colleagues from other universities.”

“I love doing research in my area of expertise/training/interest but I’m simply no longer willing to do it for free.”

“I think that the loss of scholarly research output (especially among those for whom the doors of academia have only recently been opened - women; Indigenous people; people of colour; LGBTQ2; etc.) is a significant problem that seems to be under-appreciated in the ongoing dialogue regarding the problem with high numbers of contract faculty.”

CAUT report, *Out of the Shadows:  
Experiences of Contract Academic Staff*





# INVEST IN GRADUATE STUDENTS

Today's graduate students are tomorrow's leading researchers. Whereas Canada leads the OECD with undergraduate attainment, Canada is 26th among OECD countries for graduate degree attainment. This means we're behind other countries in nurturing our next generation of research talent.

Budget 2019 announced an increase to federal scholarship funding, however, this announcement fell far below what was identified as needed by the Advisory Panel on Federal Support for Fundamental Science.

TABLE 2

## FELLOWSHIPS AND SCHOLARSHIPS FUNDING

	ADVISORY PANEL RECOMMENDATION	BUDGET 2019	FUNDING SHORTFALL
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

## WHY BASIC RESEARCH?

Science changes the world. But it's not always possible to predict which discoveries will have the greatest impact. Monumental scientific advances are often the result of basic research—driven by nothing more than curiosity—impossible to predict at the outset what the potential applications might be. Examples of basic research that eventually led to important applications include:

- Studying light - lasers and their various medical applications;
- Studying vibration of atoms exposed to magnets - Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) machines;
- Studying energy and radiation - X-rays;
- Geometry - the study of space and curves / Einstein's theory of relativity - GPS signals, Google maps, etc.

Basic research is predominantly performed by researchers in the post-secondary or government sectors. Industry R&D rarely has the financial backing required to simply pursue curiosity without a known potential application.

CAUT urges federal leaders to maintain and grow support for basic research.



# IMPROVE AFFORDABILITY AND ACCESS

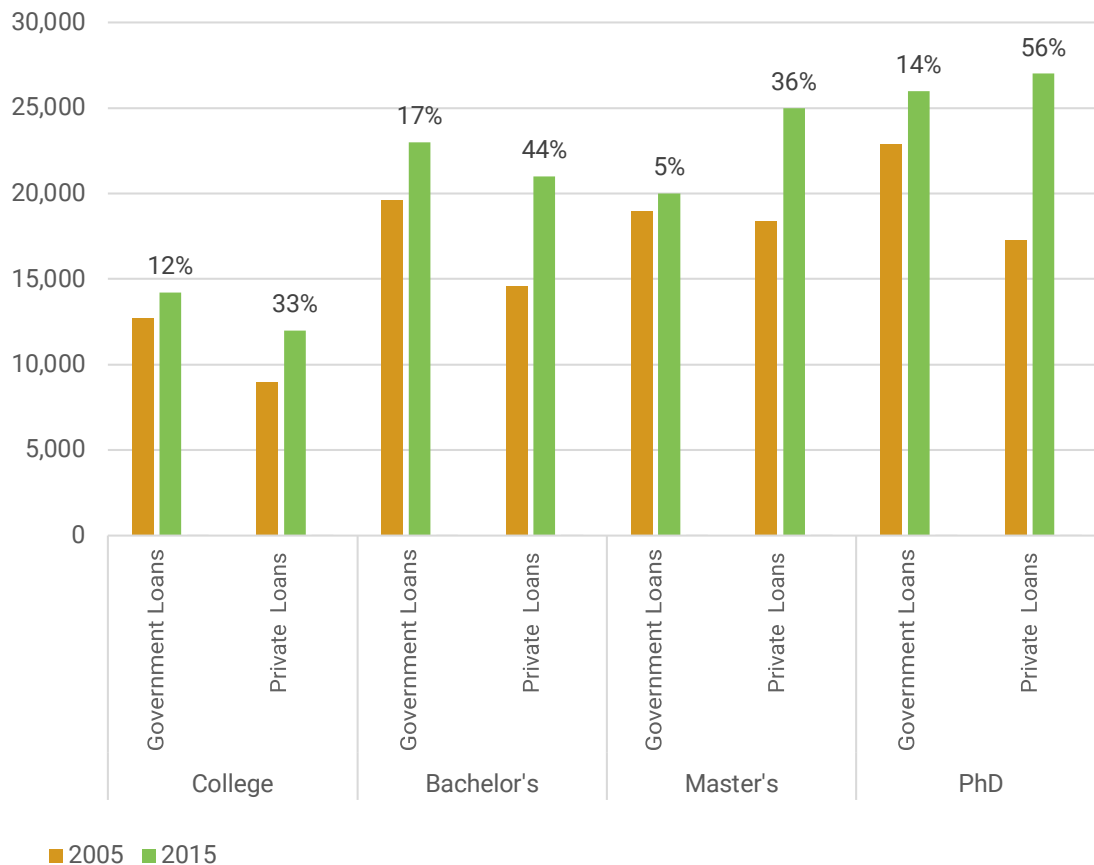
One out of two Canadians has attended a post-secondary institution, yet when polled, nearly all Canadians (93%) said they would have pursued post-secondary education after high school if they had not needed to pay tuition. This confirms that there is broad appreciation for the value of advanced education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

The escalating costs of tuition and the rapidly changing world of work are putting post-secondary education out of reach for some and contributing to unsustainable levels of household debt for others.

Student debt has a tremendous impact on young people's ability to start their lives: to buy their first home, have children, launch businesses and pursue lifelong learning. Further, by the time indebted graduates pay off their loans – with interest – they will have paid significantly more for their education than their peers who were able to pay their tuition upfront.

Skyrocketing tuition and related fees has also meant that student debt from private sources is rapidly outpacing debt from government-sponsored loans. About half of all university graduates in 2015 who needed loans to finance their education graduated with large debts (approximately \$28,000 on average).

## Average student debt owed at graduation and percentage increase over ten years (2005 - 2015)



### IMPROVE STUDENT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

A pan-Canadian plan to strengthen PSE should include support for targeted free tuition programs. Some Canadian-made examples include:

- Provincial governments have experimented recently in tuition rebate programs that target students most in need. In Ontario, some 40% of full-time post-secondary students benefitted from the free tuition program when it was in place. The Ontario Student Grant program transformed \$500 million of loans into grants in 2017-18 to ensure that students from low-income families would have no student debt upon graduation and at least 50% of students from middle-income families would have their college or university tuition covered.
- In New Brunswick, access to PSE was diminished when the free tuition and tuition relief for middle class programs were cancelled.
- In British Columbia, and now at Laurentian University in Ontario, vulnerable youth leaving the foster care system can access programs to waive tuition.

Federally, the enhancements to the Student Loans and Grants program since its introduction in 2009-10 have had some impact in reducing need for loans. Yet the federal government still disburses \$2 in loans for each \$1 in grants, while upwards of \$150 million in loans is written off each year. A more equitable disbursement, particularly with a focus on low-income and middle-income families, would be to move to a 50:50 grants and loans model.



Canadians value equality of opportunity and social mobility. A college or university education still allows for increased opportunities for young people, including to do better financially and break out of the poverty cycle. And yet, the greatest predictor of PSE attendance in Canada today is whether a young person's parent attended PSE before them. Education can be an opportunity equalizer and closing the education gap must be a priority for governments.

“Parental education remains a major determinant of PSE participation. High school students who come from a family where neither parent completed PSE are 33 percentage points less likely to complete PSE themselves than their peers whose parents have PSE credentials. When they do participate, first generation youth tend to pursue two-year college programs rather than four-year university degrees.”

*Redefining Access to Postsecondary Education,*  
a report from the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario



## BY THE NUMBERS: LACK OF AFFORDABILITY

# 50%

of university graduates today leave school with debt (owing to government loans, private financial institution debt, and loans from family).

On average, student debt at graduation today is nearly

# \$28,000

## 9.5 YEARS TO REPAY STUDENT DEBT

“I’m really disappointed and now I’m worrying. How am I going to pay \$5,000 to Centennial [College]? I don’t have any family here. I can’t ask friends for money.

*Mohammed Hossain, college student and Uber driver, reacting to news that the Ontario free tuition program was ending*





# SUPPORT INDIGENOUS STUDENTS AND INDIGENOUS PSE

There is a wide gap between the percentage of Indigenous people and the percentage of non-Indigenous young people that attend PSE institutions in Canada. This gap needs to be closed. The federal government must honour inherent and Treaty rights, and meet both the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Actions regarding post-secondary education and Article 14 of the United Nations' Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to establish and control their own education systems.

“The financial barriers and other difficulties that Aboriginal people face in attending post-secondary institutions deprive the Canadian workforce of the social workers, teachers, health-care workers, tradespeople, legal professionals, and others who can help address the legacy of residential schools.”

*Truth and Reconciliation Commission's final report*





# CLOSE DATA GAPS AND IMPROVE ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT DATA

Government data and science are vitally important to assist researchers to identify problems and find solutions. Public data sources of the highest standards are necessary for evidence-based government decision-making and vital to many researchers who work on a wide-range of issues.

## **MAINTAIN AND GROW VITAL DATA COLLECTION**

CAUT welcomed over the past few years renewed investments in data collection, analysis and sharing at Statistics Canada—notably, the return of the long-form census and of the University and College Academic Staff System Survey (UCASS). Despite these recent reinvestments, however, there remain large gaps in data needed for evidence-based policy-making writ large and specifically in relation to the PSE sector. This includes gaps in information about equity, diversity and inclusion, student financial assistance, education and labour market pathways, the workforce and student populations, researchers working in a linguistic minority context, and more.

## **LEADERSHIP NEEDED TO ENSURE DATA COMPARABILITY BETWEEN PROVINCES AND INSTITUTIONS**

Federal leadership is needed to further standardize data collection between all levels of governments and between post-secondary institutions. Though efforts are currently being made between provinces and the federal government to standardize data, some discrepancies remain, particularly at more granular levels. Municipalities, provinces and institutions are gathering vast sums of data about themselves and their populations. However, when these numbers are not comparable at a regional, provincial or national level, policy makers miss opportunities to support evidence-based decision-making. Additional federal leadership is needed to further national standard setting of statistics and data in the PSE sector.

## **OPEN GOVERNMENT DATA AND SCIENCE**

Scientific data that is funded by and pursued on behalf of the Canadian public and in the interest of Canadians should be more accessible to the public and greater scientific community.



# ENHANCE EQUITY AND DIVERSITY IN THE WORKPLACE

With equity comes excellence and innovation, but academic workplaces, like others in Canada, have systemic barriers that result in a lack of diversity and inclusion of underrepresented groups.

## **EMPLOYMENT EQUITY ACT AND THE FEDERAL CONTRACTORS PROGRAM**

To tackle the systemic barriers to advancement, the *Employment Equity Act* should be updated and strengthened along with the Federal Contractors Program (FCP). The *Employment Equity Act* includes a mandatory statutory legislative review every five years, yet the last was completed in 2002. Changes to the FCP made in 2013 raised the threshold for federal contractors from \$200,000 to \$1 million. As a result, the number of universities and colleges affected by the FCP has plummeted from fifty to just a handful in 2016. These changes to the FCP stand in sharp contrast to the equivalent U.S. federal government program where a threshold of a \$50,000 contract is set in order for employment equity requirements to apply. The thresholds in Canada for the FCP should be lowered and the program's enforcement teeth and public equity data reporting be returned.

## **EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CHILDCARE**

Federal leadership is needed for a national investment in early childhood education (ECE). We need a strong public education system from ECE to PSE to unleash potential and address both education and labour market inequality. Childcare is a barrier to full participation in the labour market for many parents including those that work in Canada's PSE sector.

## **ELIMINATE VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT IN THE WORKPLACE – ILO CONVENTION**

As a demonstrable initiative that supports national and international efforts to eliminate violence and harassment in the world of work and protect workers, especially women, Canada should ratify the *Violence and Harassment Convention* (C190) from the International Labour Organization (ILO).





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