

CAUT Parliament Hill Days

Key Messages for Parliament Hill Days 2020

- We need the federal government to step-up for post-secondary education and research.
- The pandemic has stalled research and highlighted the need for greater public investment.
- We are calling for the federal government to make the following commitments in Budget 2021:
 1. Additional funding to support the provinces and territories to improve access, quality, and affordability of post-secondary education.
 2. Accelerate basic research by increasing Tri-Council funding.
 3. Improve student assistance for low and middle-income Canadians.

Meeting Agenda

1. Introduce yourselves, note that you are part of the Canadian Association of University Teachers, which represents more than 72,000 academic staff across the country. Remember to provide some information on your association and who you represent locally.
2. Thank the MP for meeting and note the meeting purpose. ("We are here to talk about how the federal government needs to step-up for post-secondary education as it is critical to recovery and a resilient future").
3. Highlight one or all the federal opportunities (see below). Use examples and evidence from your own campus and experiences.
4. Ask the MP if they will raise in their caucus the importance of investing in post-secondary education in Budget 2021.
5. Thank the MP for the meeting and express interest in meeting again.

Federal Opportunity 1 – Increase core operating funding for PSE

- The last federal government top-up to enhance core funding for quality and affordable post-secondary education was \$800 million in 2008.
- Since the last recession in 2008, provincial government spending has been relatively stagnant, growing by 0.5% per year, when factoring inflation. Meanwhile, in the same period, postsecondary (FTE) enrolment grew by 20%.
- Per-student funding hit a high in 2008-09 but since that time spending per (FTE) student has fallen by 13%.
- At least 1/3 of academic staff are precariously employed, without job security or paid research time.
- Federal government needs to work with provinces on a framework to improve affordability, quality, and accessibility.
- Increased core funding will allow universities and colleges to focus on what they do best: educating, training, and bringing new knowledge to current and future challenges.

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Federal Opportunity 2 – Accelerate research and science

- Underfunding basic research limits innovation, slows job growth and hampers Canada's ability to attract and retain researchers.
- Stronger investments in research and fundamental science will lead to real advances in knowledge and contribute to a better quality of life for all.
- In 2017 the federal government commissioned a full review of the research ecosystem. The Advisory Panel on Federal Support for Fundamental Science (often referred to as the Naylor Report) produced a comprehensive analysis of the erosion of Canada's capacity for basic research and our declining global competitiveness.
- Despite recent increases, Canada is still about 40% short of what the Panel recommended – a gap of \$300 million per year.
- With the pandemic slowing research in many areas, and showcasing where there are knowledge gaps, Canada should accelerate investments in basic research.

Federal Opportunity 3 – Increase affordability for low and middle-income Canadians.

- The pandemic and other macroeconomic conditions have displaced many workers.
- In these times of high unemployment, more Canadians than ever could benefit from training and retraining.
- Although the federal government has expanded student loans and grants, the grants remain lower than the average undergraduate tuition fees which are on the rise.
- The top-up to the Post-Secondary Student Support Program also falls short in addressing the backlog of Indigenous students for this program.
- Historically, when federal student loan and grant programs have been increased, tuition has also risen, making the impact on Canadians trying to access higher education negligible.
- A new system that removes the barrier of direct costs for Canadians to access education is needed.
- Current federal programs for post-secondary education and training encompass a complex mix of limited opportunities. We recommend streamlining these programs and focusing government spending on eliminating direct costs for students, as opposed to measures that increase student debt.
- This would include repurposing the Canada Training Benefit to ensure that Canadians looking to build their skills and knowledge have meaningful access to opportunities and redirecting the \$900 million in unused federal funding from the failed Canada Student Service Grant program to direct student support, such as tuition waivers and an enhanced grant system, with agreements to lower tuition for all.