



Investing in Student Progress and Prosperity

November 2025



cfsfcée
CANADIAN FEDERATION OF STUDENTS
FÉDÉRATION CANADIENNE DES ÉTUDIANT-E-S



**LOBBY
WEEK
2025**
Invest in Student Progress & Prosperity

Table of Contents

1

Acknowledgements
Page 4

2

**About the Canadian
Federation of Students**
Page 5

3

Our Member Locals
Pages 6-7

4

Recommendations

Fees: pages 9-14

Affordability: pages 15-20

Justice and Divestment: pages 21-26

5

Student Voices
Pages 27-33

6

Contact Us
Page 34



SECTION ONE INTRODUCTION



Acknowledgements

The Canadian Federation of Students humbly acknowledges that our 530,000 members live and learn on the Territories of Indigenous Peoples and Nations across what is now known as Canada. We honour the enduring relationships Indigenous Peoples have with these lands and their custodianship. We recognize the historic and ongoing harms of the colonial education systems and commit to supporting Indigenous students, the reclamation of traditional knowledge, and advancing reconciliation, as promised in numerous treaties between the Crown and Indigenous Nations.

We extend our gratitude to the students, allies, collaborators and participants whose stories, experiences, and voices shaped the creation of this document and the calls within it, including the students from across Canada who contributed their voices to the final section.

Thank you to all collaborators of this report for their contributions, insights, and dedication.

Canadian Federation of Students

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About the CFS

The Canadian Federation of Students is Canada's largest and oldest student organization, uniting over 500,000 college, undergraduate, and graduate students from coast to coast. For more than 90 years, the Federation and its predecessor organizations have advocated for the interests of post-secondary students, striving to transform Canada's post-secondary landscape through policies that prioritize accessibility, quality, and equity. Our ultimate goal is a universal system of high-quality, public, tuition-free post-secondary education for domestic and international students, encompassing adult education, apprenticeships in skilled trades, and diploma or degree programs in colleges and universities.

Because universities and colleges are primarily funded by the federal government and administered by provincial governments, the policies and priorities of both levels directly shape the accessibility of post-secondary education. Tuition fee levels, student financial assistance programs, Indigenous student funding, and research funding are all influenced by these governmental decisions.

Creating generational investments in education requires both fiscal restraint and diversification of funding sources, ensuring that Canada can meet the evolving needs of students while remaining climate competitive in a global knowledge economy.

No individual students' union—regardless of size or activity—has the resources or political leverage to drive this change alone. Pooling resources and collaborating across unions allows for strategic, collective action, making necessary sacrifices today to achieve transformative victories tomorrow. The Canadian Federation of Students brings students together to transform post-secondary education, advancing policies that create lasting change on campuses and across the country.

The following recommendations and findings, organized under three key priorities of fees, affordability, and justice & divestment, reinforce our position and call for Canada's continued commitment to these goals.

Our Member Locals

ONTARIO

- ▶ Algoma University Students' Union
- ▶ L'Association des étudiantes et étudiants de l'Université de Hearst
- ▶ Association général des étudiantes et étudiants du Collège Boréal
- ▶ Brock University Graduate Students' Association
- ▶ Carleton University Students' Association
- ▶ Carleton University Graduate Students' Association
- ▶ Student Association of George Brown College
- ▶ Glendon College Student Union
- ▶ University of Guelph Central Student Association
- ▶ University of Guelph Graduate Students' Association
- ▶ Lakehead University Student Union
- ▶ Laurentian University Graduate Students' Association
- ▶ Laurentian University Students' General Association
- ▶ Association des étudiantes et étudiants francophones de l'Université Laurentienne
- ▶ Laurentian Students' Union
- ▶ Nipissing University Student Union
- ▶ Ontario College of Art and Design Student Union
- ▶ Graduate Students' Association des étudiant(e)s diplômé(e)s de l'Université d'Ottawa
- ▶ Queen's University Society of Graduate and Professional Students
- ▶ Saint Paul University Students' Association
- ▶ University of Toronto Scarborough Campus Students' Union
- ▶ University of Toronto Graduate Students' Union
- ▶ University of Toronto Students' Union
- ▶ University of Toronto Mississauga Students' Union
- ▶ Association of Part-Time Undergraduate Students at the University of Toronto
- ▶ Trent Central Student Association
- ▶ Society of Graduate Students of the University of Western Ontario
- ▶ Wilfrid Laurier University Graduate Students' Association
- ▶ University of Windsor Students' Alliance
- ▶ University of Windsor Graduate Students' Society
- ▶ University of Windsor Organization of Part-time University Students
- ▶ York Federation of Students
- ▶ York University Graduate Students' Association

Our Member Locals

PRAIRIES

- ▶ Alberta College of Art and Design Students' Association
- ▶ Graduate Students' Association of the University of Calgary
- ▶ First Nations University of Canada Students' Association
- ▶ University of Regina Students' Union
- ▶ University of Regina Graduate Students' Association
- ▶ University of Saskatchewan Graduate Students' Association
- ▶ Brandon University Students' Union
- ▶ University of Manitoba Students' Union
- ▶ University of Manitoba Graduate Students' Association
- ▶ Association étudiante de l'Université de Saint-Boniface
- ▶ University of Winnipeg Students' Association

BRITISH COLUMBIA

- ▶ Kwantlen Student Association
- ▶ College of the Rockies Students' Union

MARITIMES

- ▶ Cape Breton University Students' Union
- ▶ Dalhousie Association of Graduate Students
- ▶ Holland College Student Union
- ▶ King's Students' Union
- ▶ Mount Saint Vincent University Students' Union
- ▶ University of New Brunswick Graduate Students' Association
- ▶ Student Union of NSCAD
- ▶ University of Prince Edward Island Student Union
- ▶ University of Prince Edward Island Graduate Student Association
- ▶ Association générale des étudiants de l'Université Sainte-Anne

NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR

- ▶ Grenfell Campus Student Union
- ▶ Marine Institute Students' Union
- ▶ Memorial University of Newfoundland Students' Union
- ▶ Graduate Students' Union of the Memorial University of Newfoundland
- ▶ College of the North Atlantic Students' Union

SECTION TWO

RECOMMENDATIONS



Free Education Now

Roadmap to Free, Accessible, Quality Education

Canada must remain committed to building a tuition-free, universally accessible post-secondary education system through a coordinated 50:50 federal-provincial cost-sharing model. Such an approach would represent a strategic investment in Canada's human capital, directly addressing the escalating financial barriers that prevent many Canadians from pursuing higher education.

According to Statistics Canada, over the past two decades, undergraduate tuition has risen by nearly 56%—well above inflation—with average domestic fees reaching \$7,734 in 2025–26.

International students now face an even more inequitable system, paying an average of \$41,746 annually, reinforcing a two-tiered education model that undermines fairness and accessibility. Provinces also differ vastly in domestic tuition: Nova Scotian students pay around \$10,000 annually, whereas Quebec residents pay approximately \$3,963, widening regional disparities.

There is a clear link between affordability and access; a 1% decrease in tuition corresponds with a 0.7% increase in health sciences enrollment, a sector currently facing significant physician and nurse shortages. This evidence proves that reducing financial barriers expands opportunities and strengthens critical sectors of Canada's workforce.

Government involvement is a critical factor in student achievement. Studies have shown a strong correlation between the share of national GDP allocated to education and the quality of educational outcomes (Barro & Lee, 2015; Awaworyi, Ugur, & Yew, 2017), highlighting the importance of boosting public investment in the sector. This perspective is further supported by Cheung and Chan (2008), who argue that expanding access to higher education can bolster a nation's ability to compete and thrive in the global, knowledge-driven economy.

Free Education Now

A roadmap to free education would align Canada with leading global examples such as Germany and Norway, where tuition-free systems have proven to be both equitable and economically beneficial. By adopting a phased plan toward free education, Canada can ensure that education remains a public good, not a privilege based on income or birthplace, while strengthening national competitiveness and long-term prosperity.

CFS recommends:

- ▶ A 50:50 federal-provincial cost-sharing model to structure a tuition-free, post-secondary education system in Canada.
- ▶ Place equal value on Canada's education system as a strategic investment in Canada's human capital.
- ▶ Help close the gap between affordability and access to quality education to support in-need employment sectors.
- ▶ Continue to substantively support Francophone postsecondary education opportunities outside of Quebec, particularly for Francophone minorities.
- ▶ Keep up with international education sectors that have strong examples of free education systems.



Graduate Students and Indigenous Learners

Increase federal funding for graduate students and Indigenous learners.

Federal investment in both graduate students and Indigenous learners is vital to advancing Canada's goals of innovation, reconciliation, and equitable access to education.

Graduate students form the foundation of Canada's research and innovation sector, yet many now live below the poverty line while working more than 40 hours a week to sustain their studies, as reported by the Financial Post in 2024.

The 2024 federal budget introduced long-overdue increases to Tri-Council scholarships—\$27,000 for master's students, \$40,000 per year for three years for PhDs—bringing funding in line with U.S. levels after two decades of stagnation. However, only a fraction of graduate students receive these awards, leaving most without meaningful financial support.

Expanding access and increasing overall graduate funding are essential to ensure that research remains diverse, equitable, and globally competitive.

Indigenous learners face equally pressing barriers to access and success. The Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP) serves less than half of eligible First Nations learners, contributing to a persistent education gap.

Only 44 percent of First Nations people aged 25–64 hold post-secondary credentials compared to 68 percent of non-Indigenous Canadians, as outlined by the National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health.

A \$50-million investment over three years would advance reconciliation through education, directly implement TRC Call to Action 62, and fund culturally grounded supports proven to improve retention.

Graduate Students and Indigenous Learners

The Future Skills Centre advocates that closing the Indigenous–non-Indigenous education gap could add \$8.2 billion to Canada’s GDP by 2030, while supporting the 350,000 Indigenous youth reaching adulthood by 2026. The National Indigenous Economic Board reaffirms that this investment in the futures of Indigenous youth could generate \$27.7 billion in economic growth.

Sustained, equitable investment in these groups is a moral and economic imperative for Canada’s future.

CFS recommends:

- ▶ Expand Tri-Council Funding to support a larger percentage of graduate students and strengthen Canada’s research capital.
- ▶ Invest \$50 million to Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP) to improve retention and provide culturally grounded support for Indigenous students.
- ▶ Close the Indigenous–non-Indigenous education gap to advance reconciliation and generate economic and social benefits.



International Student Fees

Regulate tuition increases for international students.

The dramatic increase in tuition for international students in Canada is an urgent issue for both students and institutions. The pressing need for regulating international student tuition fees is apparent and currently impairs the accessibility, equity, and the long-term sustainability of post-secondary education in Canada.

Statistics Canada has reported that international tuition fees have increased by 176.9%, leading to institutional over-reliance on foreign enrollment and exposing vulnerabilities in post-secondary funding. In 2025/2026, international undergraduate students are expected to pay more than 5.0 times the tuition of their Canadian counterparts.

For example, Carleton University estimates that tuition for Ontario residents ranges from \$7,428 to \$14,189, whereas tuition for U.S. and international students ranges from \$36,982 to \$69,302—an increase of roughly 400–500% compared with domestic fees.

This stark disparity places excessive financial burdens on international students and pressures institutions to rely heavily on their enrollment as a source of revenue.

Countries such as Germany and Norway provide a clear example: they offer tuition-free post-secondary education to both domestic and international students, demonstrating that publicly funded higher education can be both feasible and economically beneficial while enhancing global competitiveness.

Further evidence from international comparisons highlights the consequences of this model. According to the European Travel Information and Authorization System, in Germany, international students contribute €15.5 billion more in taxes than the cost of their education, yielding an 8:1 return on investment, and 45% remain for over ten years, addressing labour shortages and driving long-term economic growth.

International Student Fees

Canada's proposed increase in defense spending to 5% of GDP by 2035 reflects a misalignment of national priorities. At a time when strategic investment in human capital—particularly in education—is essential for long-term prosperity, diverting resources toward military expansion risks undermining the country's economic resilience and social equity.

Regulating international tuition and increasing public funding would drastically reduce institutional dependence on foreign fees, diversify revenue, and ensure fiscal responsibility.

CFS recommends:

- ▶ An immediate cap on and reduction of international student tuition fees to address the institutional over-reliance on these fees.
- ▶ Provide more government investment to Canadian post-secondary institutions to reduce reliance.



Student Well-Being

Help improve student well-being by offsetting costs of student mental health and disability services, addressing food insecurity, and instituting public health insurance coverage for international students.

Many students face barriers to accessing the mental health and disability services they need; many of these services are not covered under provincial health insurance. The cost of mental health services can be prohibitive, as can assistive devices and other services such as hearing aids, mobility devices, and eyeglasses.

These barriers are even higher for students from Indigenous, racialized, or economically disadvantaged communities.

According to a 2022 study by Mathieu et al focusing on Black medical students and trainees across Canadian medical schools, sixty-five percent of respondents reported poor wellbeing during medical school, showing signs of burnout and expressing negative views regarding the diversity of their medical school staff or curricula.

CFS calls on the federal government to offset the cost for students of these essential services not covered by provincial insurances, and to pay special attention to Indigenous and Black students, and low-income students.

Food insecurity is a growing and often overlooked crisis affecting student health and well-being: a National Library of Medicine study found that about 39% of post-secondary students in Canada experience some level of food insecurity. International students face distinct challenges, as many campus and community food centers restrict access to citizens and permanent residents, leaving them with few affordable alternatives.

International students also face significant barriers that undermine their health and well-being while studying in Canada.

Student Well-Being

As reported by IDP International Student Counselling, without provincial health coverage, students may face per-day hospital costs of \$3,700 and clinic fees of \$120. In provinces such as Ontario, mandatory private insurance adds \$600–\$900 annually to already high tuition fees, as found in the University Health Insurance Plan, while other provinces require students to navigate complex private insurance markets with limited coverage. One Voice Canada's 2021 report highlights the consequences of this fragmented system, including medical debt, delayed care, and, in some cases, suicide.

As of July 2025, nearly 500,000 international students hold study permits, and 80% report financial stress related to healthcare, housing, and food security.

Canada should implement public health insurance for all international students, ensuring equitable access to physical, mental, dental, and pharmaceutical care. A federal transfer aligned with average provincial per-capita health expenditures would guarantee access to care while reducing reliance on costly private insurance schemes.

This model has proven effective in Alberta, where eligible international students are covered under the provincial plan from the date of arrival if they apply within 90 days. In contrast, Manitoba currently requires international students to purchase private plans costing roughly \$1,100 annually, despite government commitments to reinstate public access.

Providing comprehensive coverage for international students would protect health, reduce financial stress, support academic success, uphold universal access, and strengthen Canada's global competitiveness.

CFS recommends:

- ▶ Enable international students to access provincial health plans on the same basis as domestic students, ensuring parity in coverage for mental health, dental, pharmaceutical, and hospital services to achieve universal access.
- ▶ Implement policies that protect international students' health, well-being, and equity, recognizing their contributions to Canada.

Student Workers

Strengthen federal employment protections and eliminate employment barriers for young and student workers, and international students.

Canadian youth face significant structural workforce challenges. From a 2025 report released by Employment and Social Development Canada, unemployment among those aged 15 to 24 reached 14.2%—the highest level since the 1990s—while employers continue to report labour and skill shortages.

As found in a 2025 report by the Human Resources Director, summer job postings declined 22% compared with the previous year, highlighting gaps in accessible work experience opportunities.

Federal student employment has also significantly declined. Statistics Canada reports that between 2024 and 2025, approximately 2,000 student positions were eliminated in the public service, reducing the number of federal student employees to 7,370—the lowest level since 2017.

This decline limits access to stable, paid work experience, disproportionately affecting domestic and international students seeking federal employment opportunities.

Apprenticeships and paid placements are key to addressing these gaps, yet they remain fragmented across provinces. Because apprenticeships are tied to education systems and regional labour markets, there is no coordinated national strategy, and Ottawa's role is largely limited to indirect support or funding partnerships.

Provinces such as British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba operate high school apprenticeship programs, with Alberta expanding apprenticeship-style learning beyond skilled trades. In 2023, all provinces except Quebec recorded increases in apprenticeship registrations, demonstrating the potential for targeted action, though uptake remains uneven.

Student Workers

Ensuring fair compensation for all work-integrated learning placements is critical to removing financial barriers and promoting equitable student participation.

CFS recommends:

- ▶ Expand paid placements and integrate apprenticeships across sectors to develop a skilled workforce aligned with Canada's labour market needs. Increase Apprenticeship Grant to \$8,000.00 as previously promised by this current government.
- ▶ Expand the 24-hour work-week cap for international students, providing the same employment opportunities as domestic students.
- ▶ Reverse cuts to federal student employment programs and expand pathways to public service work, ensuring access to stable, paid work experience for both domestic and international students.



Student Housing

Invest in non-market and cooperative student housing, including for Indigenous and International students.

Canada faces a national shortage of purpose-built student accommodation, with a deficit of approximately 400,000 beds as reported in 2024 by Global Student Living Ltd.

Currently, Canada is roughly 19% behind international standards, such as the United Kingdom, where 37% of students have access to dedicated housing, according to a 2024 article published by Real Estate News Exchange Canada. As a result, around 1.2 million students struggle to find affordable housing, and only 10.3% of non-local students have access to purpose-built accommodation.

Safe and affordable housing is not only an economic necessity but also a fundamental human right, essential to students' well-being, academic success, and equitable participation in post-secondary education—including Indigenous students, many of whom face unique barriers accessing culturally appropriate and affordable housing.

The impacts of this shortage are visible across campuses. As reported by Global News in August 2024, the University of Calgary had more than 1,000 students on housing waitlists for multiple consecutive years before recent improvements.

Limited access to affordable housing increases financial stress, lengthens commutes, and compounds inequities, particularly for students from marginalized communities, Indigenous students, and those relocating from other regions.

Investing in non-market and cooperative student housing can help address affordability challenges while ensuring long-term accessibility. Federal, provincial, and institutional partnerships should prioritize funding for purpose-built housing projects and support cooperative housing models that offer cost-effective, community-oriented alternatives.

Student Housing

A coordinated national strategy to expand non-market and cooperative student housing would strengthen student retention, improve academic outcomes, and promote equitable access to post-secondary education across Canada.

CFS recommends:

- ▶ Establish a dedicated national fund providing low-cost financing and grants for the construction of new non-market, purpose-built student residences.
- ▶ Extend the Apartment Construction Loan Program (ACLP) to campus residences, with a minimum PBSA target of 75,000 units over five years, supported by a \$3 billion ACLP student-housing carve-out with fixed 50-year amortization.
- ▶ Establish a low-cost, non-market housing initiative focusing on recent graduates facing unemployment and housing insecurity, providing resources and affordable options.



Indigenous Cultural Services

Advance reconciliation through investment in culturally grounded learning programs and services for Indigenous students.

The implementation of culturally grounded wrap-around services is a critical investment in Indigenous educational success, addressing socio-economic factors that affect student resilience and achievement. Indigenous students face unique barriers—including geographic isolation, intergenerational trauma, and systemic racism—that require support designed by and for Indigenous communities.

According to multiple research findings, including those published by the First Nations Health Authority, there is firm evidence that shows that services grounded in Indigenous cultures, delivered by culturally matched staff, and incorporating Indigenous knowledge, language, and traditional healing practices significantly improve retention and outcomes. Culture-based wrap-around programs can reduce first-year attrition by up to 22% and strengthen students' confidence, self-esteem, and connection to their communities.

Indigenous students are disproportionately affected by rural and remote living, with 26% of Indigenous individuals aged 19–45 in these areas compared to 3% of the non-Indigenous population, highlighting the need for accessible, culturally responsive services.

As a report released by Indspire & the Centre for Study of Living Standards states, programs that integrate cultural components also support economic growth: closing participation gaps could see Indigenous peoples contribute 15% of total labour force growth.

The expansion of the Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP) must align with UNDRIP and Canada's reconciliation commitments. Article 14 of UNDRIP affirms Indigenous Peoples' right to control their educational systems, languages, and cultural practices. While Budget 2024 allocated \$242.7 million over three years for First Nations post-secondary education, persistent waitlists and gaps remain.

Indigenous Cultural Services

A dedicated \$50 million investment over three years would eliminate current waitlists, advance reconciliation, and generate an estimated \$8.2 billion annually, making this both an economic and moral imperative in line with UNDRIP and the TRC Call 62 mandate to fund Indigenous knowledge and teachings.

CFS recommends:

- ▶ A \$50 million, three-year investment to eliminate waitlists and create lasting, culturally responsive pathways for Indigenous student success.
- ▶ Establish a dedicated fund to support Indigenous-controlled post-secondary institutions, in line with educational self-determination in line with TRC Call to Action 62.
- ▶ Co-develop a national action plan with Indigenous partners to ensure all federal post-secondary policies align with the UNDRIP, particularly the right to control educational systems outlined in Article 14.



Permanent Residence for International Students

Ensure access to permanent residency pathways for international students.

International students are a vital part of Canada's post-secondary education system and labour market, yet significant barriers exist in accessing permanent residency (PR) pathways.

Following graduation, students can apply for the Post-Graduation Work Permit (PGWP), which allows work for a minimum of 12 months and a maximum of three years. However, processing times for the PGWP are often long and unpredictable, creating uncertainty for applicants and prospective employers.

This delay, combined with international students typically taking over six months to secure their first job compared with three months for domestic graduates, reduces the time they have to gain the Canadian work experience required under the Canadian Experience Class for PR.

These delays also have practical consequences. In some provinces, such as Ontario, PGWP holders must provide proof of six months of full-time employment to access public healthcare, compounding the financial and logistical pressures of navigating life in Canada. Additional barriers include the cost and complexity of the PR application process and the need for certified translations of documents from non-English or non-French speaking students to meet Canadian government requirements.

Federal programs such as the PGWP have demonstrated success, with more than half of the 157,000 former students in 2021 transitioning toward PR.

To strengthen these pathways, the federal government should reduce PGWP processing times, streamline documentation requirements, and provide clear support for international students navigating employment and PR eligibility.

Enhancing access to permanent residency will help international students integrate fully into Canadian society, contribute to the labour market, and support Canada's long-term economic and demographic goals.

Permanent Residence for International Students

CFS recommends:

- ▶ Targeted removal of backlogs within the PGWP assignment process through increased hiring of staff within the department.
- ▶ Implementation of temporary short-term work permits post-graduation with low barriers of entry which are factored into applications for PGWP to ensure recent international graduates are not out of work between graduation and PGWP.
- ▶ Expansion of programs for low-cost or no-cost interpretation services in the translation of official documents.



Ethical Investments and Human Rights

End federal support for corporations complicit in human rights abuses abroad and ensure ethical investment policies.

Canada's current public investment in education remains at 4.1% of GDP, according to Statistics Canada—well below historical benchmarks of 7.3% set in the 1970s and 1980s and ranking only 9th among 18 G20 countries.

This underinvestment has long-term consequences for Canada's global competitiveness, economic growth, and national security.

International evidence demonstrates the value of robust educational funding. In Germany, 45% of international students remain for over 10 years, filling labour shortages and contributing to sustained economic growth.

The disparity between other government sectors and education spending signals a misalignment of priorities. Allocating more of the federal budget toward education could yield far superior returns in human capital, innovation, and workforce readiness.

Ethical investment and procurement policies should ensure that federal support is not provided to corporations complicit in human rights abuses abroad, reinforcing Canada's global commitment to ethical governance.

Investing in education and enforcing ethical investment standards are mutually reinforcing strategies. Strengthening educational funding to levels comparable with international competitors builds long-term economic and social security, while ethical investment policies align federal operations with Canadian values.

By redirecting resources strategically, Canada can enhance its global competitiveness, secure a skilled workforce, and uphold human rights abroad.

Ethical Investments and Human Rights

CFS recommends:

- ▶ Building off the 50:50 provincial-federal model, reallocation of funds into federal-provincial matching programs to ensure inter-provincial parity on per-student spending.
- ▶ Establish protected pathways and dedicated financial support for international students seeking to study in Canada from regions experiencing conflict, genocide, and human rights crises.




SECTION THREE STUDENT VOICES



Student Voices

This section presents testimonies from students across the country who generously shared their experiences to include in this report. Their quotes illustrate how issues such as free and accessible education, decolonized learning, fairness for international students, divestment from genocide and war, affordable housing, employment security, and food security have affected them personally, highlighting the past and ongoing impact of these issues.




"As a student who has had to leave school because of mental health challenges, I know firsthand that accessible education, food security, and affordable housing are essential to tackling the ongoing mental health crisis among postsecondary students.

When we ensure students have the support they need, we give them the opportunity to truly thrive."

"Every Ontario College of Art and Design University student knows the quiet truth; sooner or later, we all choose between rent, groceries, and art supplies. Too often, it's the groceries that get left behind."

"The lack of affordable housing has forced many students to choose between paying rent and buying groceries."



"As an immigrant and international woman student, I face ongoing challenges related to inequity—especially with high tuition fees, limited financial support, and the lack of fair employment opportunities.


Despite my qualifications, I have often been disqualified from job positions that I am fully capable of doing.

These experiences highlight the urgent need for free and accessible education, greater fairness for international students, and serious attention to gender-based discrimination."

"As a student, I've seen how financial barriers, housing insecurity and limited access to food directly affect our ability to learn. Free and accessible education, fair treatment for international students, and affordable living conditions aren't luxuries but essential foundations for a just, inclusive and equitable academic community."

"As an international student, I have experienced firsthand the heavy financial burden of tuition and housing, which often leaves little room for stability in other parts of life. Many of us work multiple jobs just to afford rent and food, while trying to excel academically in a new country.

At the same time, barriers like Eurocentric curricula and underrepresentation of Indigenous and marginalized voices in the classroom show how much work remains in making education truly inclusive. For me and countless others, free and accessible education, fairness for international students, affordable housing, and food security are not abstract goals, they are the basic conditions that allow us to learn, thrive, and contribute meaningfully to our communities."



"As International students, we face disproportionate costs and barriers, from tuition to healthcare. Education should never come at the cost of our health or dignity. Every student deserves the chance to learn and live with fairness and respect."

"Students are doing their best to build a future, yet many of us are being held back by barriers we didn't create: the rising cost of education, unaffordable housing, and food insecurity that no student should ever have to face.

Free and accessible education, fairness for international students, and a commitment to ethical learning aren't luxuries, they're the foundation of a just and sustainable future.

When we invest in students, we invest in the well-being of our communities."

"International students come to Canada with big dreams, but without fair access to work and affordable housing, even basic survival becomes a challenge."

"As an international grad student, I've seen how high tuition and rent make it really hard to focus on studies and research. On top of that, finding stable work is a constant worry; most of us juggle classes, research, and part-time jobs just to get by. Education should be affordable and fair so students can focus on learning, not survival."


"For students, the future is incredibly uncertain. It can be terrifying. Will I be able to find work when I graduate? Do I even have the means to finish my degree?"

But we are not willing to accept these conditions. We will not accept an education putting us in debt at the beginning of adulthood; inaccessible classrooms and schools; universities investing in weapons, entities committing or complicit in war crimes, crimes against humanity; we won't accept any of it.

We will fight for the conditions necessary for our success and survival because we must."

"As a graduate student, I've seen how access to affordable education, housing, and mental health support directly impacts academic success and personal well-being. Every student deserves to learn without the burden of financial or emotional strain. By investing in fairness, accessibility, and sustainability, we build a future that supports both people and the planet."

"While completing my undergraduate, I had spent my entire summers working—working 63 days straight, between multiple jobs, simply to afford my right to obtain an education. Despite working so much, I still had to make sacrifices, often eating only a granola bar and juice box a day, and living with 4 others in a 3-bedroom house. It felt as though I spent much of my educational career fighting for my right to achieve it rather than being able to focus on fully committing myself to my studies."




"Students deserve more than survival. Rising tuition, housing insecurity, and food precarity are systemic barriers that exclude working-class, Indigenous, and marginalized students.

Investing in free and accessible education, affordable housing, and food security is investing in our future."

"International students are vital contributors to Canada's academic, cultural, and economic landscape. Yet, many of us face increasing uncertainty and hardship due to rising tuition fees, restrictive post-graduation work permit policies, and unclear pathways to permanent residency."

"We call for empathy, fairness, stability, and inclusion in policies that recognize international students not temporary participants, but as long-term partners in Canada's social, economic and national growth."

"As an international student, I've seen how the high cost of education and limited access to healthcare create constant stress. No student should have to sacrifice their wellbeing to study in Canada."



"International Students are done being the scapegoat for the housing crisis, unemployment numbers, and the decline in education quality. We are tired of being abused as cash cows for our institutions to stay afloat when it's the responsibility of the government to fund public education. We deserve to be treated with respect, and we demand justice!"

"As an immigrant and international woman student, I face ongoing challenges related to inequity—especially with high tuition fees, limited financial support, and the lack of fair employment opportunities. Despite my qualifications, I have often been disqualified from job positions that I am fully capable of doing. These experiences highlight the urgent need for free and accessible education, greater fairness for international students, and serious attention to gender-based discrimination."

"Working in the post-secondary sector for the last couple of years, I have witnessed the persistent issues facing both domestic and international students in this country with the following three issues: Food insecurity, employment security and food security. It is unfortunate that students continue to face these issues."



A “generational budget” cannot exclude the very generation it claims to serve. Students and marginalized communities are not footnotes in the economy: we are the future of it.

Join

If you would like to join our movement please contact

getinvolved@cfs-fcee.ca

Stay in Touch

Looking to stay in touch and learn more about our demands and recommendations? Please contact

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