

Students Together

Canadian Federation of Students

Fédération canadienne des étudiantes et étudiants

Lobby Booklet 2022



Who We Are

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. The Federation and its predecessor organizations have advocated for the interests of post-secondary students in Canada for more than 90 years. The Federation's ultimate goal is to achieve a universal system of high-quality, public, tuition-free post-secondary education in Canada for domestic and international students. This system would include adult education, apprenticeships for skilled trades, and diploma or degree programs in colleges and universities.

British Columbia

Kwantlen Student Association
College of the Rockies Students' Association

Alberta

AUArts Students' Association
Graduate Students' Association of the University of Calgary

Saskatchewan

First Nations University of Canada Students Association
University of Regina Students' Union
University of Saskatchewan Graduate Students' Association

Manitoba

Brandon University Students' Union
University of Manitoba Graduate Students' Association
University of Manitoba Students' Union
Association étudiante de l'Université de Saint-Boniface
University of Winnipeg Students' Association

Ontario

Algoma University Students' Union
Brock University Graduate Students' Association
Carleton University Graduate Students' Association
Carleton University Students' Association
Collège Boréal Association générale des étudiants et des étudiantes

Student Association of George Brown College

Glendon College Students' Union / L'association des étudiantes et étudiants du collège Glendon

University of Guelph Central Student Association

University of Guelph Graduate Students' Association

l'Association des étudiantes et étudiants de l'université de Hearst

Lakehead University Student Union

Laurentian University Students' General Association

Laurentian University Graduate Students' Association

Association des étudiantes et étudiants francophones de l'Université Laurentienne

Nipissing University Student Union

Ontario College of Art and Design Student Union

University of Ottawa Graduate Students' Association des étudiant(e)s diplômé(e)s de l'Université d'Ottawa

Queen's University Society of Graduate and Professional Students

Continuing Education Students' Association of X University

Ryerson Students' Union

X University Graduate Students' Union

Saint Paul University Students' Association

Scarborough Campus Students' Union

University of Toronto Graduate Students' Union

Association of Part-Time Undergraduate Students of the University of Toronto

University of Toronto Students' Union

University of Toronto at Mississauga Students' Union

Trent Central Student Association

University of Western Ontario Society of Graduate Students

Wilfrid Laurier University Graduate Students' Association

University of Windsor Graduate Student Society

University of Windsor Organization of Part-time University Students

University of Windsor Students' Alliance

York Federation of Students

York University Graduate Students' Association

New Brunswick

University of New Brunswick Graduate Students' Association

Prince Edward Island

Holland College Student Union

University of Prince Edward Island Graduate Student Association

University of Prince Edward Island Student Union

Nova Scotia

Cape Breton University Students' Union

Dalhousie Association of Graduate Students

University of King's Students' Union

Mount Saint Vincent University Students' Union

Student Union of NSCAD University

Association générale des étudiants de l'Université Sainte-Anne

Newfoundland & Labrador

Grenfell Campus Student Union

Marine Institute Students' Union

Graduate Students' Union of the Memorial University of Newfoundland

Memorial University of Newfoundland Students' Union

College of the North Atlantic Students' Union

Setting the Stage

The year is 2022, and the world is entering the third year of the pandemic. Post-secondary students in Canada have had their studies put on hold or interrupted, and some may have lost jobs or prospective opportunities, or struggled with financial uncertainty, and many experienced isolation and anxiety about their health and future.

While we have all been impacted by COVID-19, students have been amongst those hardest hit. During the pandemic, students and graduates have been struggling with rising tuition costs, debt, food insecurity, houselessness, and increasing mental health needs. These intersecting challenges form the basis of the current post-secondary landscape, indicating a need for more government support—now more than ever.

STUDENT ISSUES

Tuition Fee Increase

Cost of Living Increase

Debt Increase

(Un)Employment

Tuition Fees Increase

Even though many students moved out of residence or student housing, shifted to online classes, and used less of the campus and its services throughout the pandemic, in 2021/2022 tuition fees continue to increase across the country:

Type of Student	% change from 2020/2021 academic year	Average tuition cost for 2021/2022
Canadian undergraduate student	+1.7% more than previous year	\$6,693
Canadian graduate student	+1.5% more than previous year	\$7,472
International undergraduate student	+4.9% more than previous year	\$33,623
International graduate student	+3.6% more than previous year	\$20,120

Source: Statistics Canada Tuition fees for degree programs, 2021/2022

Setting the Stage

Cost of Living Increase

In the last 10 years, while Canadian tuition has increased on an average of 3.7% annually, in that same time period the rate of inflation has increased by 1.65%.[1] Furthermore, when comparing average single room residence costs to consumer prices, the average residence cost has increased by 274% and the average meal plan costs have increased by 197%, compared to an average consumer price increase of only 160% (Figure 1).

Students are being priced out of life due to higher inflation, stagnant wages and diminished public funding.

Since 1980, average undergraduate tuition fees have increased by 926% and average graduate tuition fees have increased by 1244%, meanwhile, overall consumer prices have increased by 311% (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Average tuition fees and CPI, 1980-2021

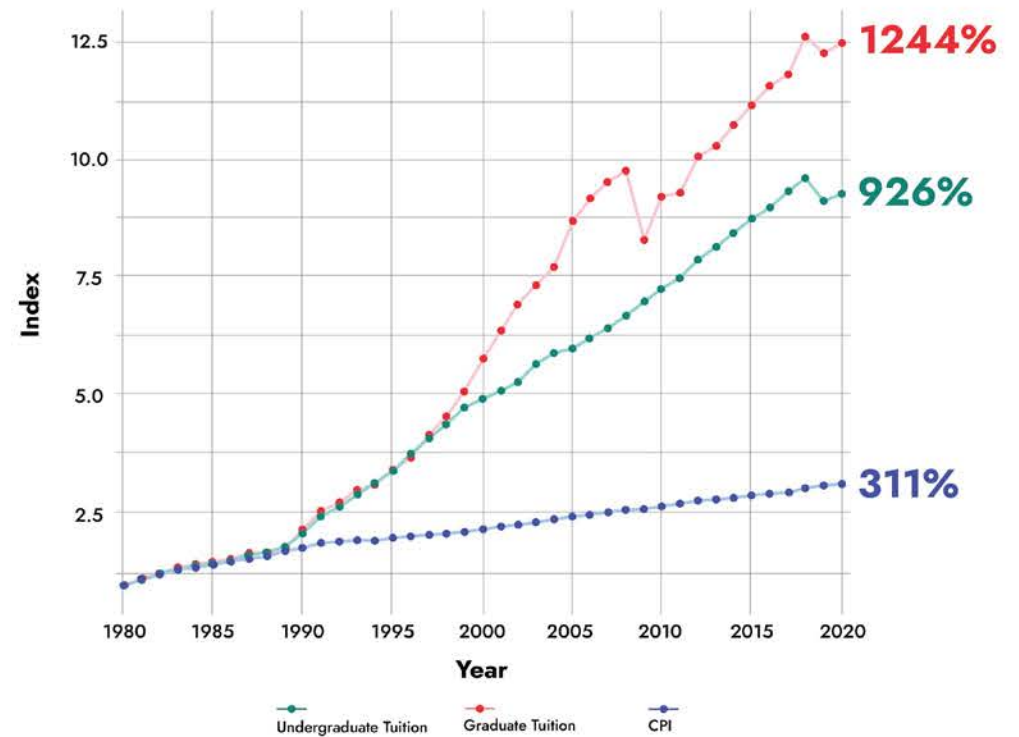
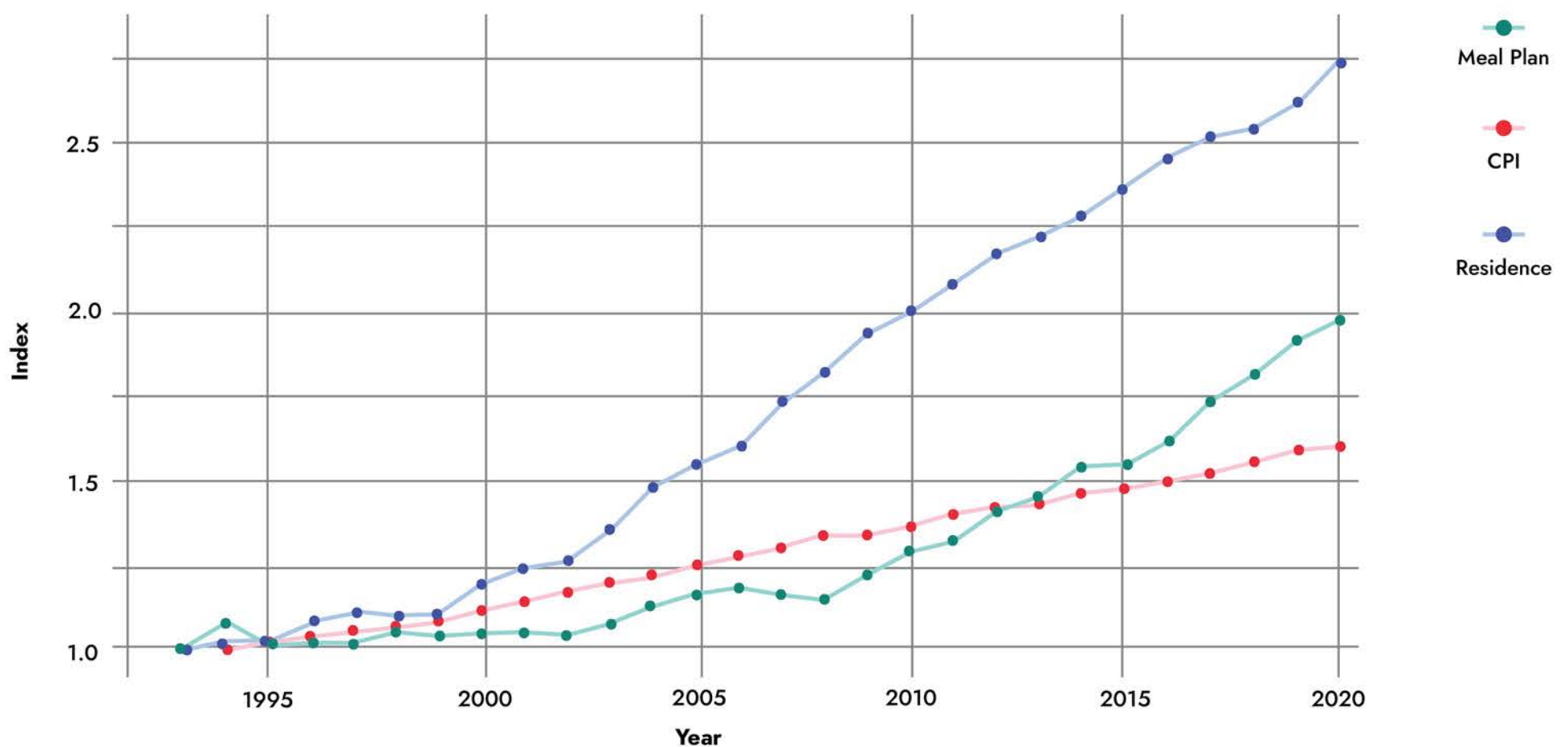


Figure 1: Average living and accommodation costs and CPI, 1993-2021



Setting the Stage

Debt Increase

This rise in tuition has resulted in an increase in students requiring financial aid to finance their education. A 2018 National Graduate Survey indicated that 56% of students who graduated from university had required financial support to do so.^[2] With the rising cost of tuition, living costs, and food, and the resulting job losses and financial stresses that the pandemic has created, we can only imagine the current increasing need for financial aid to pursue post-secondary education. Student debt has hit crisis levels: In July 2020, the amount of student loans owed to the government surpassed \$22.3 billion—the legislated ceiling set by the Canada Student Financial Assistance Act (and this amount does not even include provincial and personal loans, lines of credit, and education-related credit card debt).

(Un)Employment

Postsecondary students' employment plans have been severely impacted by the pandemic.³ Students are more likely to be working in part-time, less secure, service industries which have been hardest hit during the pandemic. During the height of the pandemic, the employment rate of students aged 20-24 was 52.5%.⁴ The pandemic has caused a great deal of financial and emotional stress, with 58% of students surveyed indicating they were "very or extremely concerned about losing their job in the future, and 67% were very or extremely concerned about having no job prospects in the near future".

[1] <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/200921/dq200921b-eng.htm>

[2] <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/210908/dq210908a-eng.htm>

[3] <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/200512/dq200512a-eng.htm>

[4] Ibid.

Executive Summary

Many Canadians have utilized our post-secondary education system. But, the current system requires students to take on unprecedented and life-altering debt loads at a very young age, to obtain an education that is increasingly proving to be a necessity in our modern economy. Canadians are inheriting enormous amounts of debt and struggling to meet basic needs, despite paying more than previous generations for housing and education.

To create a system of accessible, high-quality, post-secondary education, the federal government must move away from piecemeal reforms and a funding model that downloads costs onto individuals. The Federation believes that to successfully do this, the government must develop a national vision for Canada's Post-Secondary Education System. This can be achieved by creating a committee composed of federal elected officials, provincial governments, and non-partisan experts to develop a shared vision for a renewed post-secondary education system across Canada. In particular, the Federation is calling on the government to prioritize these immediate aspects:



Improving Affordability

The continuation of the doubling of the Students Grants Program, past its expected end date of 2023. The eventual goal would be to move towards a 50:50 model for Grants and Loans.

The continuation of COVID-19 aid: Reintroduce the Canada Emergency Student Benefit (CESB) or an equivalent benefit for all students enrolled at post-secondary institutions and recent graduates until March 31, 2023. This would also include a moratorium on the repayment of student loans until March 31, 2023.



Fairness for International Students

Streamline and simplify the path to citizenship by expanding permanent residence status and protections to all international students.

Legislate protections under the Canada Health Act to ensure all international students studying at Canadian post-secondary institutions are eligible to receive immediate health insurance upon arrival in Canada.



Indigenous Learners' Right to Education

Allocate more funding towards programs and institutions that teach and preserve Indigenous languages, culture, and history to Indigenous and non-Indigenous learners at post-secondary institutions across Canada.



Affordable Housing

Include the realities of student housing as part of the National Housing Strategy by creating a federal rent assistance program.



Increased Mental Health Support

Allocate funding directly to subsidizing the upfront costs of regular mental health services for post-secondary students, such as one-on-one counselling or therapy through community based and culturally relevant service providers.

Timeline



1946-1951

Over 130,000 World War Two Veterans enter the post-secondary education system. Canada's Veterans Charter affords them free tuition, living allowances and other benefits. The post-secondary education system is no longer a finishing school for Canada's elite.

1960-1975

Enrolment in post-secondary education surges by 300 percent following the veterans' example, along with a dramatic rise in the proportion of women on campuses. Many of today's post-secondary education institutions are built in this period, all based on strong public funding and a 50/50 cost-sharing model between provincial and federal levels of government.

1996

The biggest single cut to federal transfers for post-secondary education is made (\$2.29 billion, an 18 percent reduction) as the EPF framework is replaced by the Canada Health and Social Transfer. Tuition fees rise dramatically, particularly for professional programs.

1998

The federal government announces measures aimed at promoting individual saving schemes and scholarships to address increasing levels of student debt

2006-2011

Over 18,500 Indigenous learners, roughly half of those who qualify are denied funding due to inadequate investment in the Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP).

2008

The federal government introduces a modest national system of needs-based grants to be delivered by the Canada Student Loans Program (CSLP).

2015

The federal government commits to implementing all recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, including provision 11 to, "provide adequate funding to end the backlog of First Nations students seeking a post-secondary education."

2016

The federal government eliminates several education tax credits, and implements a 50% increase to CSLP grants.

Timeline Cont.



2017

The federal government announces 90 million in funding over 2 years for the Post Secondary student Support Program (PSSP)

2018

The federal government invests \$1.7 billion over five years for fundamental research as well as a \$10 million investment for Métis post-secondary education. Also introduced is funding to establish a National Framework to Address Gender-Based Violence at Post-Secondary Institutions.

2019

The federal government commits to decreasing Canada Student Loans Program (CSLP) interest rates to prime from previous floating rates at prime +2.5%. Further funding commitments are made to programs for First Nations, Métis and Inuit access to post-secondary education. As climate disasters worsen, students engage in a global climate strike, demanding that leaders take action to protect their futures and those of their children.

2020

The federal government created the Canada Emergency Student Benefit (CESB) to support students through the COVID-19 pandemic by giving \$1,250 per month for full-time and part-time domestic students, as well as an additional \$750 for full-time and part-time domestic students with a dependent or a disability.

2020

The federal government doubled the Canada Student Grant for the 2020-2021 school year, while setting the maximum amount available at \$6,000 for full-time students and \$10,000 for students with disabilities.

2021

In Budget 2021, the doubling of the Canada Student Grant for the 2020-2021 school year was extended to July 2023. The federal government also commits to permanently eliminating federal interest on Canada Student Loans and Canada Apprentice Loans.

Priorities

Developing a National Vision for Canada's Post-Secondary Education System

"The plan to strengthen post-secondary education should focus on the shared priorities of improving affordability and accessibility by reducing and eventually eliminating tuition; and improving quality, through an emphasis on decent work and adequate public funding;" – Education for All Coalition

Post-secondary institutions are critical in the search for solutions to our pandemic recovery, alongside the other social, environmental, and economic challenges facing Canadians. The pandemic has been instrumental in exposing long-standing issues threatening Canada's post-secondary education system. From rising tuition costs to deepening social inequity, fewer Canadians will be able to access education and training if things continue the way they are currently progressing.

The federal government needs to develop a **national vision for Canada's Post-Secondary Education System** by creating a post-secondary education committee that is composed of federal elected officials, the provinces, and non-partisan experts that will develop a shared vision for a renewed post-secondary education system. This vision should strive to achieve a tuition-free model for post-secondary education through commitments from all levels of government.

*Canada remains to be the only country in the G7 without a Federal Ministry of Advanced Education



Improving Affordability

Tuition is the largest barrier to accessing post-secondary education in Canada. Tuition fees continue to increase yearly, and are expected to increase by \$589 for Canadian domestic undergraduate students and \$9,086 for undergraduate international students in the next five years. Since post-secondary education is now a requirement to be competitive in the current job market, students are making the costly decision to invest in their education and thus take on more and more debt.

Student debt creates an economic drag which causes students to delay making large purchases and life choices, like buying a home or starting a family, and actually reverses the positive upward mobility associated with pursuing a post-secondary degree. Targeted debt cancellation would stimulate the economy, increase spending and disposable income, and increase GDP and labour mobility while decreasing average unemployment.



During the pandemic, in order to help students and recent graduates, the federal government introduced a number of student financial assistance measures. As part of these measures, the government doubled the Canada Student Grant for the 2020-2021 school year, and set the maximum amount available at \$6,000 for full-time students and \$10,000 for students with disabilities. This was then extended to July 2023 as part of the 2021 federal budget.

The Federation calls on the Federal Government to:

- **Continue the doubling of the Canada Student Grant program, past its end date of 2023.** While other federal student aid and education planning programs have had a decrease in beneficiaries (i.e. number of federal loan recipients decreased by 5%) during the pandemic, the number of federal grant recipients have increased by 3%. Similarly, there has been a decrease in the number of new beneficiaries of the Canada Learning Bond (a program that provides \$2,000 for children from low-income families born in 2004 or later for their post-secondary education), a program which in 2020 already has a low take-up rate in eligible recipients at 41.9%. **Therefore, the government should prioritize allocating funding and the continuation of funding to programs such as Canada Student Grants, which are known to be reaching those most in need and making a difference.**
- The Federation calls for the distribution of loans and grants to be equitable, **thus the government should work towards a 50:50 model for grants and loans.** This would mean, for every dollar the government loans to students, a dollar in grants should be provided. In 2020-2021 the total amount of federal loans was just over \$4 billion, whereas the total amount of federal grants was around \$3 billion.
- Furthermore, with the continuation of the pandemic and its subsequent variants, and the resulting intermittent policies and shutdowns across the country, students and recent graduates have been forced into an uncertain job market, precarious living situations, and even more debt. **Therefore, the Federation is calling on the government to reintroduce the Canada Emergency Student Benefit or an equivalent benefit for all full-time students enrolled at post-secondary institutions and recent graduates until March 31, 2023.** Students see these measures as a first step in creating a more accessible and affordable post-secondary system in Canada.

Indigenous Learners Right to Education

Post-secondary education is a right of Indigenous people. This right was guaranteed in several foundational nation-to-nation treaties, first asserted in the Royal Proclamation of 1763, and was reaffirmed as a constitutional right in the Canadian Constitution Act of 1982. In June 2021, the Parliament of Canada passed The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act, which identifies education as an inherent right of Indigenous peoples.

The 2017 and 2019 ISC comprehensive reviews have resulted in increased federal funding for Indigenous post secondary education. With Budget 2019's \$814.9 million investment over 10 years and \$61.8 million ongoing for distinctions based Indigenous PSE strategies, along with Budget 2021's promise to provide \$150.6 million over two years, it is all the more important for these programs to be assessed according to demand to ensure that they are meeting the needs of every Indigenous student who wishes to attend post-secondary education.



The Federation calls on the Federal Government to:

- Ensure that all Indigenous learners are able to pursue post-secondary education without cost, while ensuring this education includes their history, cultures and languages, and that all Indigenous peoples' rights are upheld and protected.
- Allocate more funding towards programs and institutions that teach and preserve Indigenous languages, culture, and history to Indigenous and non-Indigenous learners at post-secondary institutions across Canada
- Full implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), including the principle of free, prior and informed consent for any project impacting Indigenous territory.

Fairness for International Students

International students are an important and growing part of Canadian post-secondary education. With over 352,000 international students studying in Canada, up from 142,170 in 2010, the need for increasing support has never been greater.

By Fall 2021, the average tuition fees for international undergraduate students were \$33,623, with some paying over \$50,000—which is **more than five times the fees paid by Canadian citizens**. Apart from the many cultural challenges that international students face when studying in Canada, there are many systemic challenges that need to be addressed in order for international students to be able to meet their basic needs.

As we've witnessed recently with the short-lived Canadian Emergency Student Benefit (CESB), international students are often omitted from basic government services and programs. **Streamlining and simplifying the path to citizenship—including granting international students permanent residency—are effective legislative measures to ensure there is access to government services and programs.** This is crucial considering Canada's economic demands are intrinsically connected with immigration, which is needed to meet the net labour growth over the next decade. Many basic services and programs like public health care and housing vouchers are available to Canadian citizens, but again, international students do not qualify.

Average undergraduate tuition fees for domestic and international full-time students in Canada



The Federation calls on the Federal Government to:

- Work with provinces to immediately regulate current international fees to be tied to those of domestic students, while negotiating a tuition-free model under a federal Post-Secondary Education Act.
- Streamlining and simplifying the path to citizenship, including granting international students permanent residency, are effective legislative measures to ensure there is access to government services and programs.
- **Requiring provinces and territories to grant international students the same access to public health care as Canadian citizens—which follows the responsibility of the government under the Canada Health Act—would lessen the broadening disparity between international students and domestic students in Canada.**
- Streamlining and simplifying the Study Permit and Temporary Resident Visa application into a single application would reduce the processing time and backlogs.
- Recognition of jobs (NOC 0, A and B jobs) worked in Canada as students towards Canadian Work experience in the Comprehensive Ranking System (CRS) Criteria for permanent residency applications.

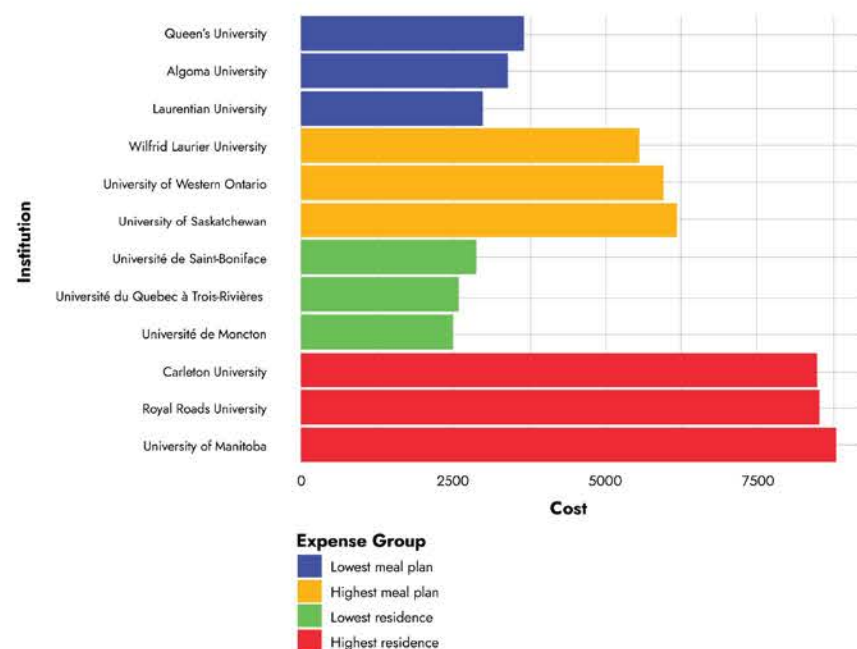
Affordable Housing

The national housing crisis is disproportionately affecting students, not only in terms of supply, but affordability as well. Students face many financial barriers to accessing affordable living conditions, especially with the rising costs of living coupled with the fact that Canadian tuition has increased at 3.7% annually in the last 10 years, while the rate of inflation has only increased 1.65%. With residency options for university students averaging well over \$10,000 annually, and the average cost for a bachelor apartment going up from 2020 by 5.6%—averaging \$1,280 per month—the ability for students to access affordable housing while also dealing with the rising costs of living is unsustainable.

The national housing crisis cannot be addressed without an approach towards a comprehensive focus on implementing affordable student housing shortages. This focus needs to include **a federal rent assistance program that deals with the seriousness of the lived realities and experiences of student housing in the National Housing Strategy**. Addressing this crisis means tackling the serious effects of poverty that many students face, and providing a renter's rebate which would make significant progress to the government's goal to eradicate poverty and homelessness.

The Federation calls on the Federal Government to:

- Provide an income-tested renter's rebate of \$400/year for households earning up to \$60,000 annually that are not receiving other rental support, which would address many of the financial barriers that low-income students and international students face.
- Include the realities of student housing as part of the National Housing Strategy, emphasizing the benefit of expanded non-profit, co-op, and/or subsidized rental housing for all community members, including low-income students.



Improving Mental Health Supports

There is an ongoing mental health crisis in Canadian post-secondary institutions—increased rates of depression, anxiety, and suicide among young people over the past decade. Research suggests that student debt and financial stress contribute to lower mental health and increased substance abuse. Emergency visits related to mental health issues increased for Canadians between the ages of 5-24 by 75% between 2007 and 2017. According to CAMH, people between the ages of 15-24 are more likely to experience mental illness and/or substance abuse disorders than any other age category.

Prior to the pandemic, 40% of young Canadians aged 15-24 stated they have poor mental health. One year into the pandemic, about one in five Canadians report high levels of mental distress.



The pandemic has necessitated online learning, which in turn, has contributed to students' feelings of isolation and disconnection. The pandemic has exacerbated preexisting strain on already underfunded and under resourced campus mental health services. Students are not only experiencing long wait times to receive mental health support but they are also subjected to mandated leave of absence policies. These policies force students to take academic leave if they are perceived to be a danger to themselves.

The Federation calls on the federal government to:

- Increase investments in accessible mental health supports that are adequately funded and staffed in order to compensate for the loss of campus resources and the increasing rise in mental health needs amongst post secondary students and recent graduates
- Remove barriers to accessing mental health supports by offering grants to community-based and culturally relevant service providers that treat post-secondary students

[1] Statistics Canada. "Impacts on Youth." October 20, 2020

[2] Kwong, Jeff C.. et al. "Early Effects of Rising Tuition Fees on the Medical Student Population." Canadian Medical Association Journal Vol. 166, No. 8, April 2002.

[3] "Anxiety, feelings of depression and loneliness among Canadians spikes to highest levels since spring 2020." Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. January 25, 2022