



JUST RECOVERY FOR STUDENTS

AS PROPOSED BY:
THE CANADIAN FEDERATION OF STUDENTS

WHO WE ARE

The Canadian Federation of Students is Canada's largest and oldest student organization, uniting over 530,000 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.



JUST RECOVERY FOR STUDENTS

COVID-19 has presented numerous challenges and crises worldwide, the post-secondary education sector included. Students and graduates that were already struggling with rising tuition costs and large loan repayments are now also faced with unemployment, financial uncertainty, insolvency, homelessness, food insecurity, increasing mental health needs, economic instability, and more.

Programs like the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) and Canada Emergency Student Benefit (CESB) were meant to provide emergency funds to ensure Canadians did not have to choose between paying rent and eating, yet student support and the moratorium on

loan repayments ended as the second wave of COVID-19 rose across the country. Now, with so much uncertainty and little support from governments, students and graduates are left to face these crises alone— with their health, safety, financial future, and education all in jeopardy.

That's why the Canadian Federation of Students is advocating for a Just COVID-19 Recovery for Students to ensure the generations that will rebuild Canada and propel us forward through this pandemic are able to do so without the unnecessary additional barriers they currently face.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1

FOLLOWING THROUGH ON COMMITMENTS TO STUDENTS AND GRADS

That the federal government move to immediately invest in emergency measures and utilize the remainder of the more than \$9 billion committed to post-secondary students.

2

UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACTS OF COVID-19 ON CURRENT AND FUTURE STUDENTS

The federal government commits to, and executes within a timely manner, quantitative and qualitative studies that will highlight the short- and projected long-term intersectional impacts of COVID-19.

3

INNOVATING POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION THROUGH A STUDENT-CENTERED APPROACH

The federal government commits to developing a costed framework that ensures both the immediate and long-term universal funding of post-secondary education, by alleviating financial barriers, immense debt loads, poverty and precarity, as well as deteriorating mental health now, and going forward.

4

DEVELOPING A NATIONAL VISION FOR CANADA'S POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION SYSTEM

That the federal government move to strike a post-secondary education committee that is made of elected officials, the provinces, and non-partisan experts that will develop a shared vision for a renewed post-secondary education system.

5

RELIEVING THE BURDEN OF STUDENT DEBT

That the federal government move to immediately extend the loan freeze moratorium as an emergency measure on student loan repayment until December 2021.



RECOMMENDATION 1

FOLLOWING THROUGH ON COMMITMENTS TO STUDENTS AND GRADS

That the federal government move to immediately invest in emergency measures and utilize the remainder of the more than \$9 billion committed to post-secondary students by:

- a. Permanently eliminating interest on federal student loan debt and implementing a stop-gap urgent loan forgiveness program for those in need, ahead of a long-term solution for tackling the student debt issue;
- b. Investing in the expansion of the Canada Recovery Benefit (CRB) to include every student; including individuals who were excluded from the CESB, such as international students and recent graduates. This measure is to support those unable to work due to COVID-19 and would continue until economic indicators show decreasing unemployment rates amongst students and graduates;
- c. Committing to the immediate targeted funding of federal grants, with the intention to move to a universal framework that covers 50% of student tuition costs in each province and territory. Post-pandemic, provincial/territorial governments would have to match the grants and debt forgiveness as a condition of receiving these funding transfers;
- d. Investing in accessible mental health supports that are adequately funded and
- e. 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;
- e. Addressing the equity issues posed by tying emergency student relief to the Canada Summer Jobs Program. This measure does not help students in the interim and ties worth of support to ability to be productive; as well as can explicitly exclude international students, students with disabilities, and disproportionately exclude Black and Indigenous students from these opportunities. It is arguably another way in which student relief is being used as a method to transfer greater support to businesses, rather than promote student wellbeing and survival during this pandemic.

DID YOU KNOW?

Financial insecurity as a result of high tuition fees and debt are a determinant of mental health that begins while students are still pursuing their degree. It can be equally harmful for the mental health of parents who have child-related educational debt, and the mental health outcomes are worse amongst low-income families.

RECOMMENDATION 2

UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACTS OF COVID-19 ON CURRENT AND FUTURE STUDENTS

That the federal government commits to, and executes within a timely manner, quantitative and qualitative studies that will highlight the short- and projected long-term intersectional impacts of COVID-19. Not taking these actions and forcing students to carry immense debt during a public health crisis, and thereafter, will inevitably result in:

- a. Negative impacts on entrepreneurs, small business owners, and marginalized communities;
- b. Mental health implications for students and youth overrepresented in precarious and frontline work;
- c. Greater inequities faced by marginalized groups – in particular First Nations, Metis, and Inuit peoples, those living with disabilities, Afro/Caribbean/Black persons, racialized groups, neurodiverse peoples, LGBTQ2S+ peoples, French-speaking students outside of Quebec, lower socioeconomic individuals and families, Crown Wards, refugees, and new Canadians.

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Yassin Dabeh was a 19 year old Syrian refugee in London, Ontario with education and life goals that were unable to be realized because he contracted COVID-19 while working in a LTC home and passed away. Canada needs to collect intersectional data to better capture the disproportionate impacts on equity-seeking communities

RECOMMENDATION 3 INNOVATING POST- SECONDARY EDUCATION THROUGH A STUDENT- CENTERED APPROACH

That the federal government commit to tasking the Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer with producing estimates and costed frameworks for ensuring both the immediate and long-term universal funding of post-secondary education by the federal, provincial, and territorial governments. This will ensure students can fully participate in, and contribute to, the Canadian economy without financial barriers, immense debt loads, poverty and precarity, or deteriorating mental health now, and going forward. Therefore, it is imperative that:

- The federal government commit to funding this framework in the short and long-term;
- The government immediately boost direct federal funding for post-secondary education to the provinces by a minimum of \$3 billion;
- The provinces and territories participate in 50:50 grant matching funding and debt elimination as a condition of receiving these federal funds;
- The program values be adjusted annually for inflation, enrollment growth, and institutional cost, to ensure a zero tuition framework for all in perpetuity;
- The program is audited annually in order to ensure students from lower income families, oppressed groups, Indigenous students, Black students, and other equity-seeking groups are statistically shown to benefit from the funding.

STUDENT TUITION COST

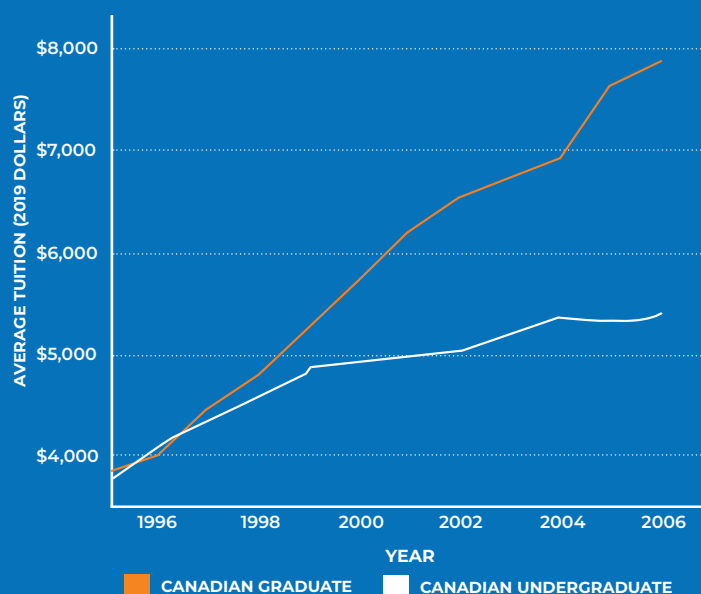


Figure 1: Average tuition fees for domestic undergraduate and graduate programs (2019 dollars), 1995 to 2006.

INTERNATIONAL TUITION TRENDS

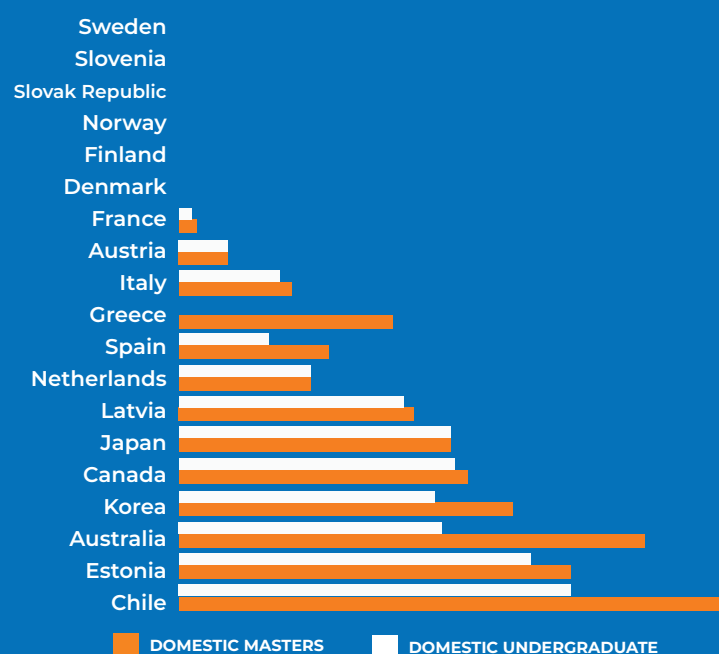


Figure 2: Average tuition for domestic undergraduate and graduate students of comparable OECD countries, 2017/2018 (as reported in Education at a Glance 2019: OECD Indicators).

RECOMMENDATION 4

DEVELOPING A NATIONAL VISION FOR CANADA'S POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION SYSTEM

That the federal government move to strike a post-secondary education committee that is made of elected officials, the provinces, and non-partisan experts that will develop a shared vision for a renewed post-secondary education system, which:

- a. Upholds the principles of high-quality, publicly funded post-secondary education;
- b. Protects the independence and collegiality of university and college governance;
- c. Standardizes funding programs and subsidies to eliminate barriers associated with studying in different parts of the country (e.g., the North vs. the coasts, Quebec, etc.);
- d. Eliminates financial barriers to access, and address barriers to access that are faced by oppressed groups and communities;
- e. Emphasizes equitable and just policies around international

and migrant student enrolment, tuition costs, and access;

- f. Streamlines and simplifies the path to citizenship for international students, post-graduation; Is governed by a federal post-secondary Act.

DID YOU KNOW?

Investing in targeted tuition and debt reduction programs while working towards universal relief would allow for critical framework development that would proactively address numerous equity issues and improve the quality of the post-secondary sector overall.

RECOMMENDATION 5

RELIEVING THE BURDEN OF STUDENT DEBT

That the federal government move to immediately extend the loan freeze moratorium as an emergency measure on student loan repayment until December 2021.

DID YOU KNOW?

Student debt creates economic drag and causes students to delay making large purchases and life choices, and actually reverses the positive upward mobility associated with pursuing a postsecondary degree. Targeted debt cancellation would stimulate the economy, increase spending and disposable income, and increase GDP and labour mobility while decreasing average unemployment.

CONSEQUENCES

We know that with immediate and meaningful action a just COVID-19 recovery for all is possible. Students and graduates cannot continue to be left behind. The implications of COVID-19 have disproportionately affected young people, students, and graduates looking to complete their studies, enter the job market, and just get by. We also know that access to post-secondary education, even before the pandemic, disproportionately affected equity-seeking groups. As with any universal public good, the progressive elimination of tuition fees for all ultimately creates a more equitable system, as it will be financed through a progressive income tax system.

The ramifications of continued immense debt loads will result in a severe second crisis among students, graduates, and families who will be faced with impossible choices between necessities, a place to live, food, education, and paying back loans or contributing to savings. This cycle

must end, and it must end now. If not, we will see multiple generations severely impacted for years to come with consequences greatly outweighing the economic crisis of 2008, with the potential to be more akin to the Great Depression. Now is the time for Canada to demonstrate how much we value education and are willing to support students now and as we move forward through the pandemic.

We know that with immediate and meaningful action a just COVID-19 recovery for all is possible; will you invest in us?