

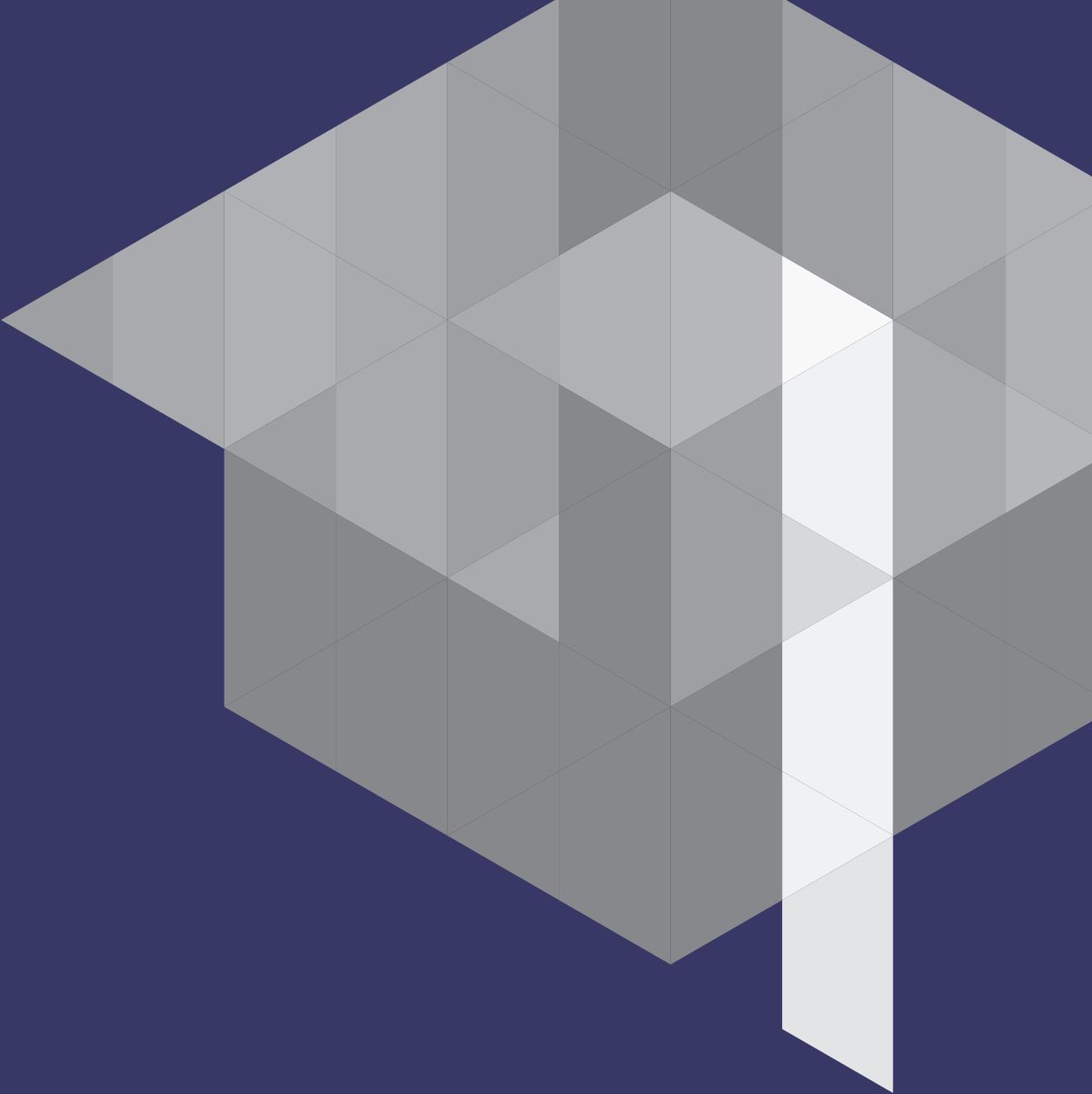
# PUBLIC EDUCATION FOR THE PUBLIC GOOD

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A NATIONAL VISION FOR  
POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION



CANADIAN FEDERATION  
OF STUDENTS



# CANADIAN FEDERATION OF STUDENTS

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# THE CANADIAN FEDERATION OF STUDENTS

With over 600,000 members, represented by more than 80 students' unions in all ten provinces, the Canadian Federation of Students is the voice of post-secondary students in Canada. The Federation and its predecessor organisations have represented students in Canada since 1927. The Federation represents full- and part-time students at the college, undergraduate, and graduate levels.

## BRITISH COLUMBIA

University of British Columbia Students' Union Okanagan  
Camosun College Student Society  
Douglas Students' Union  
Emily Carr Students' Union  
Kwantlen Student Association  
College of New Caledonia Students' Union  
North Island Students' Union  
Northern British Columbia Graduate Students Society  
Northwest Community College Students' Union  
Okanagan College Students' Union  
College of the Rockies Students' Union  
Selkirk College Students' Union  
Students' Union of Vancouver Community College  
Thompson Rivers University Students' Union  
Vancouver Island University Students' Union

## PRAIRIES

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

## ONTARIO

Algoma University Students' Union  
Association général des étudiantes et étudiants du Collège Boréal  
Brock University Graduate Students' Association  
Carleton University Students' Association  
Carleton University Graduate Students' Association  
Association étudiante de la Cité collégiale  
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 Association of Mature and Part-Time Students  
Laurentian University Graduate Students' Association  
Laurentian University Students' General Association

## ONTARIO (CONT'D)

Association des étudiantes et étudiants francophones de l'Université Laurentienne  
Laurentian Students' Union  
McMaster University Graduate Students' Association  
Nipissing University Student Union  
Ontario College of Art and Design Student Union  
Student Federation of the 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  
Ryerson Students' Union  
Continuing Education Students' Association of Ryerson  
Saint Paul University Students' Association  
University of Toronto Scarborough Campus Students' Union  
University of Toronto Graduate Students' Union

## ONTARIO (CONT'D)

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

## QUÉBEC

Concordia Student Union  
Concordia University Graduate Students Association  
Dawson Student Union  
Post-Graduate Students' Society of McGill University  
**MARITIMES**  
Cape Breton University Students' Union  
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 AND 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

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# PUBLIC EDUCATION FOR THE PUBLIC GOOD

## IT'S TIME FOR SUSTAINABLE INVESTMENT IN EDUCATION

It's no secret that high youth unemployment and record high debt levels mean youth in Canada are facing a difficult future. While the economy continues on a slow recovery, students and youth are being left behind through decreased program funding, ineffective employment plans, and a lack of federal strategies.

Over the last five years, high youth unemployment has been a constant challenge in the Canadian labour market. Attainment of a post-secondary education has become a prerequisite for participation in Canada's workforce. It's time for Canada to prioritise youth employment. We have looked abroad to find solutions, and Germany's Dual Vocational Training System is a plan that values the work of youth and has long-term rewards for the economy and society. Publicly funded, and with no tuition fees, Germany serves as a model for us in Canada on how to build a thriving economy that values workers.

Without any federal direction, divergent paths have emerged between provinces' post-secondary education systems. Provinces have the ability to set tuition fees at whatever level they see fit, resulting in students facing significantly different challenges in accessing higher education depending on the province they are studying in. In addition, Aboriginal peoples—the fastest growing population in Canada—are still largely shut out of post-secondary education and prevented from contributing to the knowledge economy.

Three decades of public funding that has failed to keep up with enrolment growth has had a notable impact on students' education experience. Class sizes have increased, while repairs to infrastructure have gone largely unaddressed. While the current funding model is unsustainable, there are options within reach.

Investments in students, colleges and universities are investments in Canada's future. Just this year, the Newfoundland and Labrador government's decision to replace all provincial student loans with grants shows the innovation and dedication needed to rebuild an accessible post-secondary education system.

**It is time for bold leadership. Maintaining Canada's strong economic position requires leadership at the federal level, and a substantial reinvestment in students, colleges and universities and post-secondary research. This document outlines key recommendations for the federal government to build and maintain a strong post-secondary education system that ensures a prosperous and equitable future for generations to come.**



# CANADIANS SUPPORT ACCESSIBLE PUBLIC EDUCATION

## A majority of Canadians AGREE that:

- ▶ a university or college education is more important than ever to succeed in today's society;
- ▶ the federal government should attach conditions to dedicated transfer payments to the provinces;
- ▶ the government should invest more in post-secondary education, even if it means they have to pay slightly more in taxes;
- ▶ the government should invest in making college and university more affordable, even if it means a small increase in taxes; and
- ▶ education is a common good and should be paid for by the government.



Should tuition fees be increased, frozen, or reduced?

- Reduced: 40%
- Frozen: 37%
- Increased: 13%
- Don't Know: 10%



What is the single most important thing the government should do for post-secondary education?

- Lower Tuition Fees and Student Debt: 56%
- Invest more in research: 11%
- Fund more spaces for qualified students: 15%
- Reduce class sizes by hiring more professors: 5%
- Don't know: 13%



What do you think is the major reason why people who are qualified and want to go to university or college don't?

- University and college is too expensive: 65%
- Family responsibilities: 20%
- Not enough spaces in colleges and universities: 9%
- Don't know: 7%

Polling results are taken from an Abacus Data online survey conducted October 2 to 7, 2014, among a random sample of 1,140 adult residents of Canada. The poll was commissioned by the Canadian Federation of Students. National results are considered accurate to within 3.1 percentage points, plus or minus, 19 times out of 20. The data were weighted according to census data to ensure that the sample matched Canada's population according to age, gender, and region of the province. Totals may not add up to 100 due to rounding.



**72%** of Canadians think that young people have to take on too much debt to get a university or college education.



If universities and colleges don't get the funding they need to operate, what should they do?

- Look for overhead and administrative savings: 59%
- Reduce the salaries of professors and other staff: 11%
- Increase class sizes: 8%
- Raise tuition and other fees: 7%
- Lay off professors and other staff: 2%
- Don't know: 13%



**77%** of Canadians oppose increases in tuition fees. Of those, 40% support a reduction from current levels.



**61%** of Canadians want the federal government to set conditions on transfer payments to ensure provinces use the money as intended.



**62%** of Canadians believe governments are not doing enough to ensure that everyone who is qualified has a chance to get a university or college education.



Taking advantage of Canada's current relative economic strength, compared to other industrialised countries, requires **leadership at the federal level and an investment in students, as well as in colleges and universities.** This document outlines three recommendations for the federal government to build and maintain a strong post-secondary system that trains a workforce capable of competing in today's economy.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## FOR A PROSPEROUS AND PRODUCTIVE FUTURE FOR ALL CANADIANS

### RECOMMENDATION 1

Prioritise alleviating the education-related debt burdening Canadians and encourage an economically competitive work force by:

- ▶ increasing the value and number of non-repayable grants available to students by redirecting funds allocated to education-related tax credits and savings schemes to the Canada Student Grants Program;
- ▶ removing the funding cap on increases to the Post-Secondary Student Support Program and ensure that every eligible First Nations, Inuit, and Métis learner is provided funding; and
- ▶ protecting the investments made in Canada's post-secondary education system by implementing a federal Post-Secondary Education Act in cooperation with the provinces, modeled after the Canada Health Act, accompanied by a dedicated cash transfer.

### RECOMMENDATION 2

Remove targeted research funding earmarks within the granting councils and award research funding based on academic merit determined through a peer review process. Increase the number of Canada Graduate Scholarships to be consistent with average program growth and distribute them proportionally among the research councils according to enrolment figures.

### RECOMMENDATION 3

Double the annual investment in the Youth Employment Strategy to ensure program effectiveness and develop a strategy, modeled after the German Dual System of Vocational Education to increase the employment and training opportunities for Canada's youth.

## POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION IN CANADA

Canada's public post-secondary education system has become markedly less public over the past three decades. Beginning in the 1980s, the federal government limited the increases in transfers to the provinces for post-secondary education, effectively decreasing per-student funding. In 1995, the federal government made one of the deepest funding cuts in history, slashing transfers to the provinces for social programs by \$7 billion. In every province, with the exception of Québec, this funding cut was passed on directly to students in the form of massive tuition fee increases. Despite the federal government posting multi-billion dollar surpluses in the late 1990s and early 2000s, funding for post-secondary education was never restored.

Prior to these cuts, access to post-secondary education was similar from province to province. Today, tuition fees vary widely and provincial residence is now a major factor in determining the individual cost of post-secondary education. These cuts led most provinces to spend less on higher education and are paving the way for a shift towards private funding as the main source of revenue for Canada's universities and colleges. The cost of education has grown dramatically over the past 20 years, from an average of \$1,706 in 1991-1992, to \$5,772 in 2013-2014, an increase of over 238%.

Today, post-secondary institutions rely largely on private sources of funding, primarily through tuition and ancillary fees, to cover operating costs. Only half of the operational funding for universities

today comes from public sources (Figure 1.1), well below the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) average of 69 percent, with institutions like the University of Toronto receiving more private funding than public. Direct correlation can easily be drawn between the global economic competitiveness of Canada and its investment in post-secondary education (Figure 1.3). Federal government cash transfers for post-secondary education, as a proportion of GDP, have declined by 50% between 1992-1993 and 2013-2014. Furthermore, between 1982 and 2012, the proportion of university operating revenue provided by government sources declined from 83% to 55%, while the proportion funded by tuition fees has increased from 14% to 38%.

In order to both reduce inequalities across socioeconomic groups and regional disparities and increase the country's economic competitiveness internationally, the federal government must once again make affordable, high quality post-secondary education a high priority.

Canadians overwhelmingly agree that the federal government must provide more support for post-secondary education.

Investments in social programs, such as health care and post-secondary education, regularly rank as top priorities for Canadians. In a recent poll conducted by Abacus Data, only 16 percent of Canadians identified tax cuts, and only another 16 percent identified deficit reduction, as the most important priority for the federal government. By

comparison, over 65 percent identified investments in social programs, reducing unemployment, or reducing poverty as their top priority. Despite public opinion, the federal government has prioritised tax cuts and deficit reduction over essential investments in Canada's social programs. Reducing the government's fiscal capacity by multi-billion dollar tax cuts over the past decade undermines the federal government's ability to adequately fund training both for the country's future workforce and for out-of-work Canadians. If the government were to shift its priorities, it could provide the necessary funding to make education affordable for all Canadians while also improving the quality and facilities of Canadian colleges and universities.

**\$13.7**  
**BILLION**

Annual cost of corporate tax cuts to the government.



66% of Canadians Agree that investing in social programs and reducing poverty and unemployment are higher priorities than tax cuts and deficit reduction.

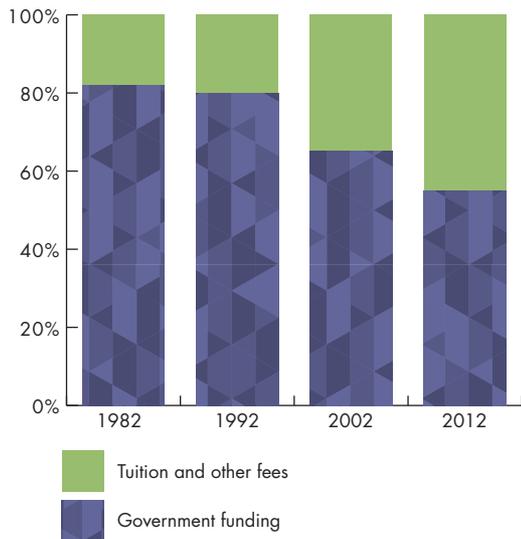
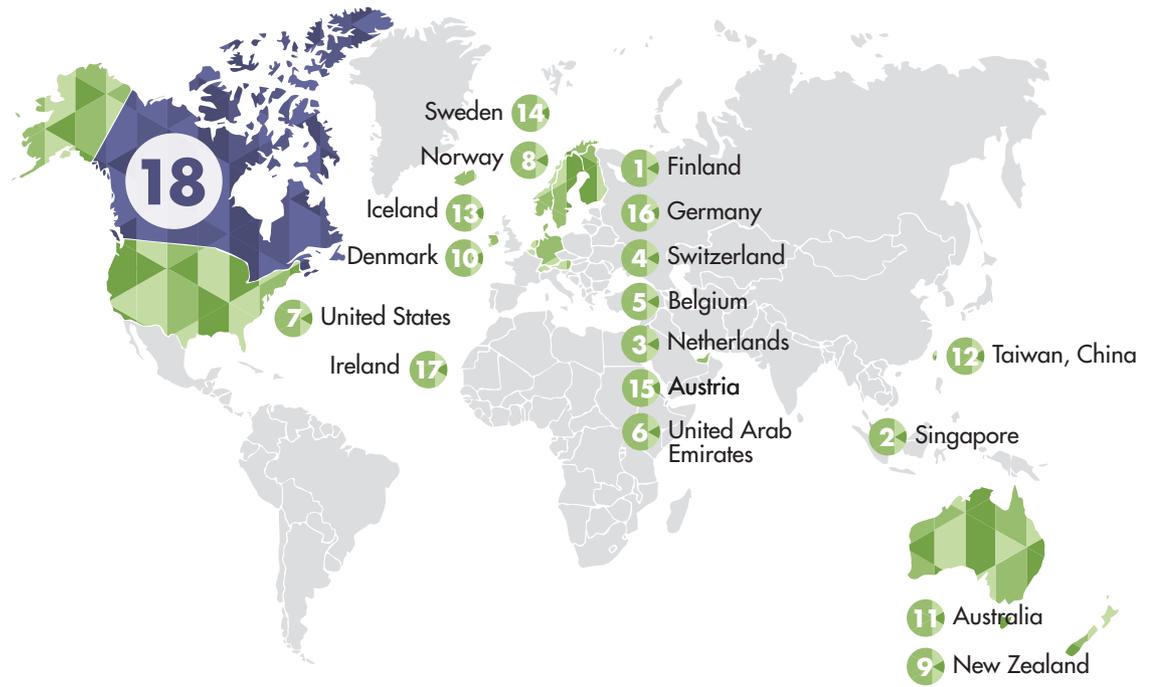
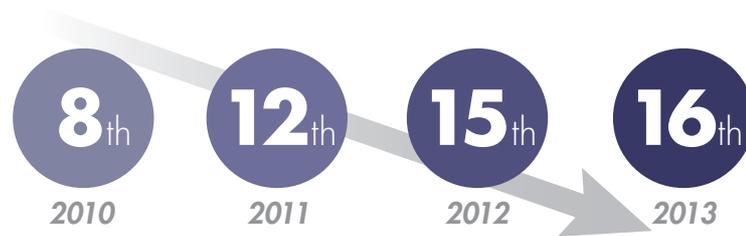


FIGURE 1.1: university operating revenue divided between private funding and government funding.

## IS CANADA'S HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM ECONOMICALLY COMPETITIVE?

According to the World Economic Forum's annual report on economic competitiveness, Canada's higher education system is failing to keep pace with other countries in equipping citizens with the skills needed to advance the domestic economy and remain globally competitive.

CANADA WAS RANKED:



## A GENERATION IN DEBT

Rising tuition fees and the prevalence of loan-based financial assistance have pushed student debt to historic levels. This past year, almost 455,000 students were forced to borrow in order to finance their education. The amount owed to the Canada Student Loans Program is increasing by nearly \$1 million per day.

In September 2010, the total amount of student loans owed to the government reached \$15 billion, the legislative ceiling set by the Canada Student Financial Assistance Act. This figure only accounts for a portion of total student debt; it does not include provincial and personal loans, lines of credit, and education-related credit card debt. In response, the government altered the definition of "student loan" to exclude over \$1.5 billion in federal student debt. Even with this new definition, the federal student loan debt surpassed the \$15 billion limit. In response, the federal government amended the Canada Student Financial Assistance Act to increase the limit to \$19 billion while at the same time dramatically reducing parliamentary oversight of the program.

High tuition fees force students to take on large amounts of debt in order to cover the high up-front costs of pursuing post-secondary education (Figure 1.3). Many potential students are rightfully reluctant to take on this debt and associated risk. Of the 70 percent of high school graduates who cite financial reasons as the main factor for not pursuing post-secondary education, one in four cited accumulation of debt as the main deterrent. Those from marginalised communities, low-income

backgrounds, and single parents are more likely to be strongly averse to accumulating student debt. Studies show that youth aged 18-24 with parents earning more than \$100,000 in pre-tax income are almost twice as likely (49%) to enroll in university than those earning less than 25,000 (28%). Students are also finding it more difficult to find meaningful summer employment to help cover the costs of rising tuition fees. According to Statistics Canada, student unemployment is about twice as high as the rate of unemployment for the general population.

Funding post-secondary education through student debt is an unfair model. Requiring low- and middle-income students to finance education through debt results in these students paying more for education than students who have the resources to pay the full cost of their education up-front. Students who take on debt to pay their fees must pay both tuition fees and the accumulated interest on their student loans. Such a system unfairly burdens low- and middle-income families.

Research finds that debt levels have a direct impact on success and retention. Students with higher debt levels are far less likely to complete their degree or diploma.

The National Graduates Survey released in March 2014 reports levels of debt that cannot be characterised as manageable or reasonable. Three years after graduation, well over a majority of all graduates have substantial debt remaining, and they are reporting difficulty repaying their loans. This is particularly true for graduates with master's



72% of Canadians think that young people have to take on too much debt to get a university or college education.

**178,000**  
**CANADIANS**

178,000 Canadians were unable to make any payments on their Canada Student Loans as of September 2014.

and doctoral degrees, and especially those with outstanding private loans for whom, several years after graduation, average debts are accumulating and compounding.

One explanation for the persistence of debt is due to gross annual earnings. One quarter of all graduates entering the workforce are earning wages that are inadequate to make loan payments. In fact, Canada has the highest proportion of adults with a post-secondary education earning less than half the national median income in the OECD. In spite of their education, one-quarter of women with a college or bachelor's degree earned incomes classified just above low-incomes cut off line three years after graduation. For male graduates, the picture is marginally better. Today, having a bachelor or college degree is no longer enough to secure a middle-income.

Not only are graduates having trouble repaying their student loans, but studies show that high levels of debt discourage individuals from starting a family, purchasing a home, or starting a business. It also discourages graduates from pursuing low paying or volunteer experience in a career-related field that may offer necessary experience to get a middle-income job. All of these factors depress the economic contribution by graduates and lead to a stagnant economy.

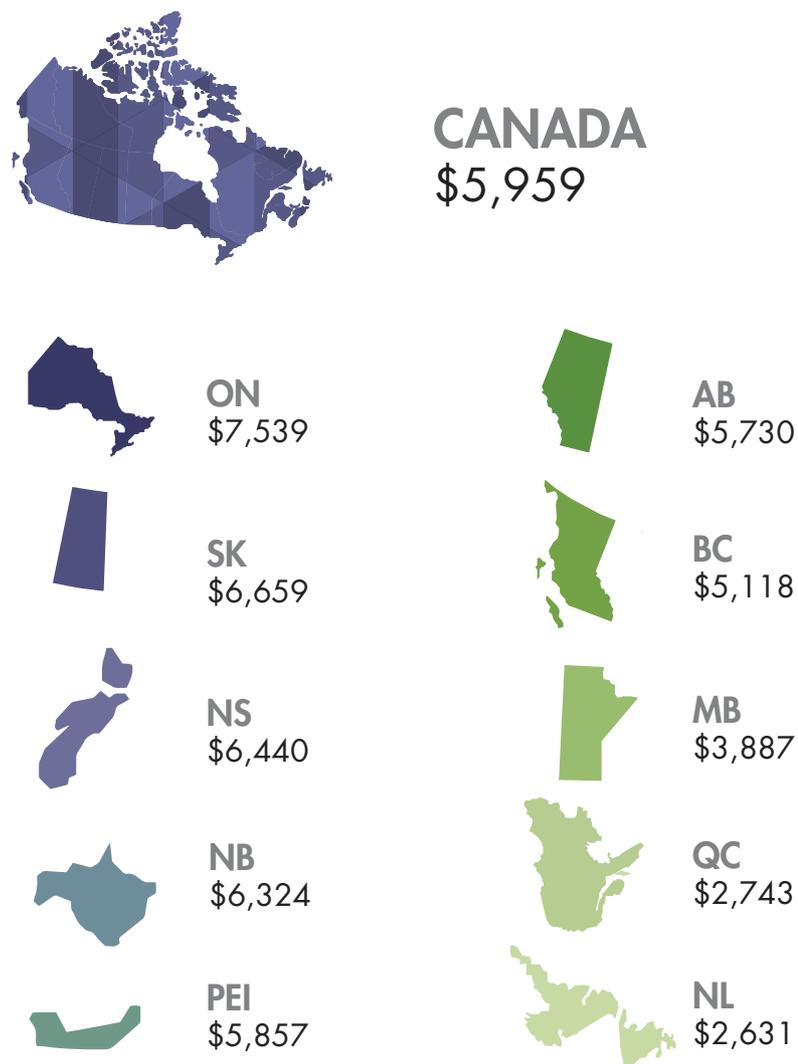


FIGURE 1.3: Map of tuition fees across Canada. Average tuition fees in 2014-2015.

## A SOLUTION TO UNDERFUNDING

Since the cuts to federal transfer payments in the 1990s, the quality of post-secondary education has declined. Class sizes have increased substantially, between 1990 and 2006, the ratio of students to full-time faculty members increased by almost 40 percent.

Cash transfer payments for post-secondary education are roughly \$1.3 billion short of 1992 levels when accounting for inflation and population growth.

The 2009 federal budget allocated \$2 billion to college and university infrastructure, focused entirely on new building projects. While new infrastructure is welcome, it only increases the funds needed to maintain and renovate infrastructure on campuses, a cost that is already over \$1 billion per year, and does little to address existing renovation and maintenance needs.

University and college budgets are strained to such an extent that deferred maintenance poses serious health and safety risks at many schools across the country. In 2009, the Canadian Association of University Business Officers estimated that the total value of deferred maintenance on Canadian campuses was more than \$5 billion, half of which is considered urgent, a 35 percent increase in less than a decade.

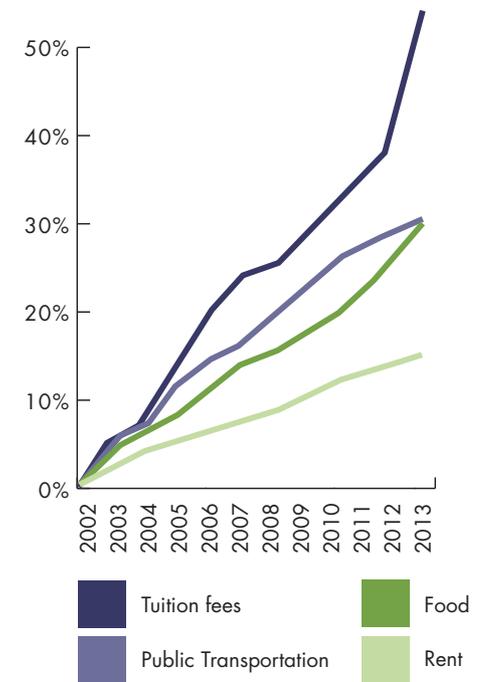
Despite the moderate reinvestment in post-secondary education in recent years, the federal government has done little to ensure that these investments will have their desired impact. In the last fifteen years, tuition fees have become

one of the largest expenses for university and college students, on average increasing over five times the rate of inflation (Figure 1.4). High tuition fees limit access to post-secondary education for students from low- and middle-income backgrounds. At their current rate of increase, tuition fees are estimated to exceed all other student expenses combined in five years.

According to Statistics Canada, has determined that students from low-income families are less than half as likely to pursue a university education than those from high-income households.

Statistics Canada has also found that the most frequently-reported reason high school students did not pursue post-secondary education was financial. Tuition fees act as a flat tax, a cost applied to all students at the same rate regardless of their financial resources. While some believe that postsecondary education will significantly increase a student's long-term earning potential by up to \$1 million, thus justifying tuition fee increases, the reality is much more humble.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) reports that male graduates earn only an additional \$80,000 over their lifetime. The return is substantially lower for female graduates who, on average, earn only an additional \$46,000.



**FIGURE 1.4: Tuition fees have increased faster than all other student costs.**

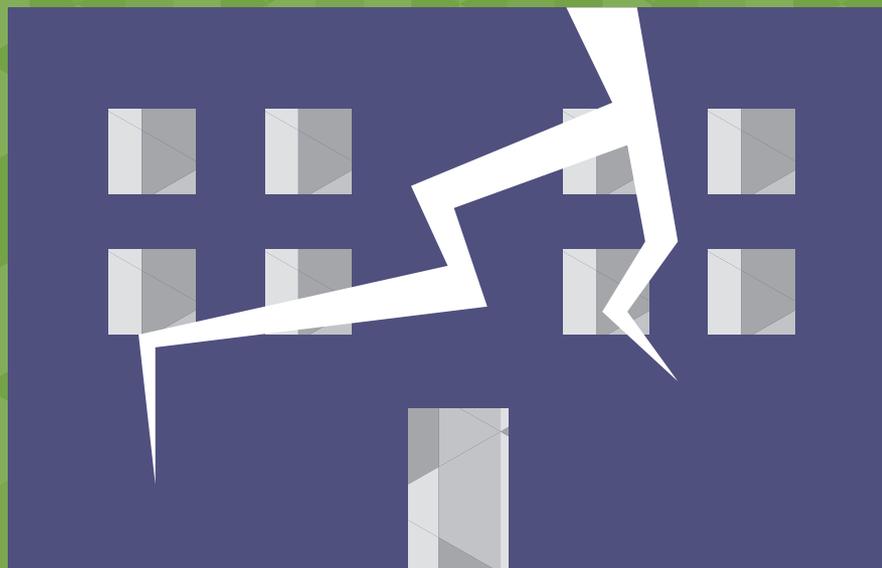
Given that at least 66 percent of new jobs require some post-secondary education, higher education is increasingly becoming a prerequisite for participating in the labour market and earning an average income, not a guarantee of future wealth. The fairest method of financing the post-secondary education system is through the progressive income tax system.

The system ensures that the wealthy and poor are taxed in a fair manner, reflecting their respective ability to contribute and the subsequent personal economic benefit obtained as a result of their education.

Canadians have made it clear that they are comfortable with increased government spending to improve access to education. According to a recent Abacus Data public opinion poll, Canadians rank tuition fee reductions as the top priority for government investment in education.

**“high levels of student debt are one of the primary effects of the move towards policy that downloads the costs of public education onto students and their families.”**

ALTERNATIVE FEDERAL BUDGET  
Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives



**The 2009 federal budget allocated \$2 billion to college and university infrastructure, focused entirely on new building projects. While new infrastructure is welcome, it only increases the funds needed to maintain and renovate infrastructure on campuses, a cost that is already over \$1 billion per year, and does little to address existing renovation and maintenance needs.**

**University and college budgets are strained to such an extent that deferred maintenance poses serious health and safety risks at many schools across the country. As of this year, the Canadian Association of University Business Officers estimates that the total value of deferred maintenance on 51 Canadian university campuses is more than \$8.4 billion, half of which is considered urgent, a 68 percent increase since 2009.**

## INVEST IN EFFECTIVE MEASURES: GRANTS NOT LOANS

While creating the Canada Student Grants Program was an important first step to meaningfully reducing student debt, a larger investment in up-front grants is required. The tax credit and education savings schemes currently operated by the federal government allow for personal income tax savings on education-related costs and a higher rate of return on education-related savings, respectively. The indications are, however, that the total cost of the programs will exceed \$2.8 billion this year, making them by far the government's most expensive direct spending measure.

Despite their large price tag, the education tax credit and savings programs are very poor instruments to improve access to post-secondary education and relieve student debt. All students qualify for tax credits, regardless of financial need, which ultimately benefits those with the lowest amount of debt and those from high-income backgrounds. Savings schemes have largely benefitted those from high-income backgrounds, as individuals from low-income families often do not have the funds necessary to invest in the first place.

This \$2.8 billion, if used instead for upfront grants, could allow every dollar loaned by the Canada Student Loans Program (CSLP) to be a non-repayable grant. The CSLP expects to lend approximately \$2.5 billion during the 2014-15 academic year. If the amount of money the federal government spent on savings schemes and education-related tax credits each year had been simply shifted to the Canada Student Grants Program, student debt owed to the federal government could be greatly reduced.

**\$2.46 billion**

**Amount that the Canada Student Loans Program expects to lend for the 2013-14 year.**

**\$2.83 billion**

**Approximate cost of education tax credits and savings schemes for the 2013-14 year.**

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**[High levels of] student debt are one of the primary effects of the move towards policy that downloads the costs of public education onto students and their families.**

ALTERNATIVE FEDERAL BUDGET 2013  
Canadian Center for Policy Alternatives

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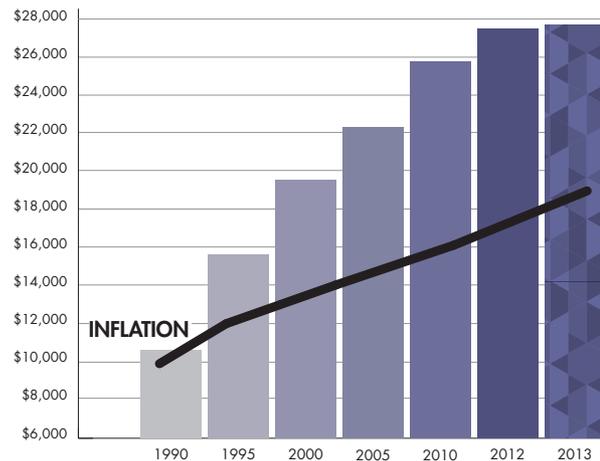
**[Canada Education Savings Grants] give scarce public funds to the wrong households... the CESG program should be discontinued.**

KEVIN MILLIGAN  
University of British Columbia Economist

## BARRIERS TO ACCESS FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

Graduate students often face a variety of challenges in pursuing their studies, including limited funding options, an increasingly commercialised and restrictive research environment, rising tuition fees, little access to need-based grants, and high levels of student debt from previous degrees. Last year, average tuition fees for graduate students increased by 2.8 percent, to over \$6,200 (Figure 1.5).

The financial burden of high fees for graduate students is exacerbated by the foregone earnings from not being employed full-time, along with substantial debts accumulated from earlier degrees. Despite their significant investment of time and money, a recent study indicated that doctoral graduates earn little more—and in some instances, less—than those with only a master’s degree.



**FIGURE 1.5:** incidence and average amount of student loan debt upon graduation.

Funding for curiosity-driven grants in the social sciences and humanities lags far behind the applied sciences. Without proper levels of funding and support for graduate students, Canada’s research and innovation capacity will continue to fall behind global competitors.

An investment in graduate students will help to produce the highly skilled workers that Canada needs to compete in the global economy.

Students often enter graduate programs with substantial debt from their previous degree. However, there are currently no need-based grants available to graduate students from the federal government. Students from low-income families have a harder time affording graduate studies due to high tuition fees and the lack of financial

assistance. In the absence of a grants program, completion rates for graduate degrees remain low.

Canada Graduate Scholarships (CGS) provide merit-based funding directly to graduate students. These scholarships are administered through the granting councils and are one of the main mechanisms for the federal government to fund graduate studies. The limited number of scholarships available has meant that many of the best and brightest researchers are unable to maximise their potential. Increasing the number of CGS would help promote graduate research and ensure that graduate students have the resources to focus on their research, which will pay long-term dividends to Canada’s research capacity and innovation.

**“Student debt loads have never been higher... people are graduating with \$30,000 in student loans on top of \$5,000 in credit card debt... the result is that many students fall into a hole they can’t easily climb out of.”**

**LAURIE CAMPBELL**  
Executive Director, Credit Canada

## INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN CANADA

The Federal government anticipates significant shortages in the labour market over the next 15 years. This is largely due to the retirement of aging “baby-boomers” coupled with fewer young Canadians entering the labour market due to declining domestic birth rates. It is estimated that there will be more than two million job openings over the next decade.

Canada could benefit from a robust International Student Program from which it could draw skilled workers. By increasing the number of international students who make Canada their permanent home, we can significantly ease the expected shortage of skilled workers. More international students making the transition to the domestic workforce, particularly in key sectors and regions, will help meet looming skills, trades, technical and professional needs and ensure that our economy will continue to grow.

Education stakeholders agree that there is untapped potential for attracting international undergraduate students, but that the market is very competitive. International students comprise about 8.2% of all students attending Canadian post-secondary educational institutions; lower than the OECD average.

The number of international students worldwide currently exceeds 4 million. By 2025, that number is expected to grow to 7.2 million. There will be strong competition for these students, as other leading jurisdictions are equally aware of the benefits of international education and are pursuing their own strategies to attract a larger share of these students.



**GDP Contribution of international students to the Canadian Economy in 2013: \$8 billion.**

While all students in Canada have faced dramatic fee increases over the last decade, tuition fees for international students have become particularly burdensome in recent years. By fall 2014, average tuition fees for international undergraduate students were \$20,447—more than three times the already high fees paid by Canadian citizens—with some paying up to \$24,000. For some graduate programs, such as medicine and law, fees rise to a staggering \$75,000 per year. High differential fees are an unfair burden and a barrier to post-secondary education for international students. Ultimately, such fees could threaten Canada’s ability to attract and retain foreign scholars.

Charging differential tuition fees to international students is drastically out of step with the long-term needs of Canadian society. According to the federal government’s own research, immigrants who have previously worked or studied in Canada have the easiest time integrating into the Canadian workforce and prospering in Canadian society. Differential tuition fees work directly against the Canadian government’s professed goal of building an educated, prosperous, and innovative society.

While international students already contribute over \$8 billion annually to the Canadian economy, their potential contribution as residents and citizens, if naturalized, would present a boon to the Canadian economy and stem shortfalls in the aging labour market.

## KEEPING THE PROMISE OF ABORIGINAL EDUCATION

Access to post-secondary education plays a pivotal role in the creation of a more equitable, financially stable and sustainable society. Yet, there is great disparity in access across the country, not only affecting students, but Canada as a whole.

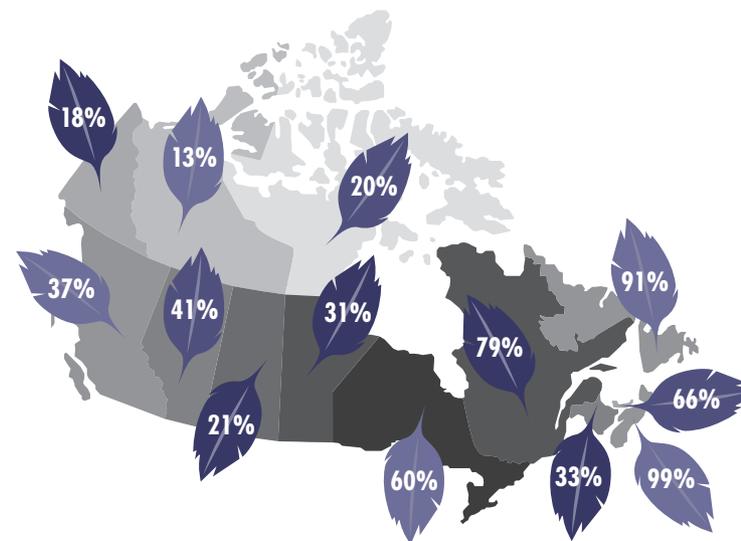
As with most OECD members, Canada's economic future depends on its ability to meet the challenge of an aging workforce and relatively low domestic birth rates. Unlike peer countries, however, Canada has an advantage with its rapidly growing Aboriginal population.

Canada's Aboriginal population is growing at six times the rate of the non-Aboriginal population (Figure 2.1). According to the 2011 National Household Survey, 1.4 million people, 4.3 percent of Canada's population, identified as Aboriginal. Of these, 46 percent were under the age of 24.

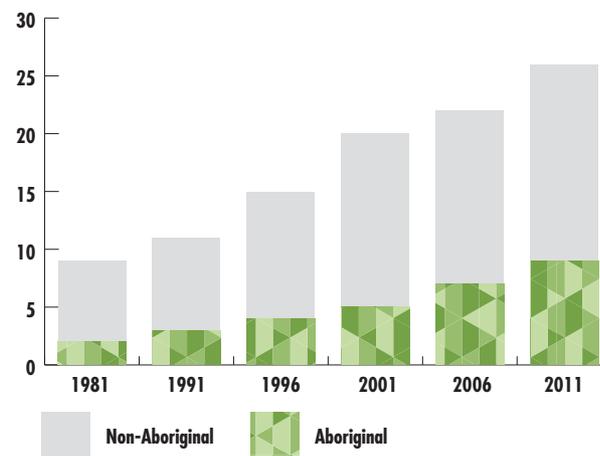
It is estimated that over 300,000 Aboriginal youth could enter the labour force in the next 15 years alone. In May 2009, the Centre for the Study of Living Standards concluded that closing the education gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students would lead to an additional \$179 billion in direct GDP growth, and over \$400 billion in total growth over the next 20 years.

Educational attainment levels among Aboriginal peoples remain significantly lower than the non-Aboriginal population. In 2011, 29 percent of Aboriginal persons over the age of 25 did not have a high school diploma compared to 12 percent of the non-Aboriginal population. Only 10 percent of Aboriginal persons hold a university degree compared to 27 percent of the total population.

This low-level of educational attainment is in stark contrast with the right to education for Aboriginal peoples laid out in a series of treaties signed over the course of several decades and recognised in Canada's Constitution.



**FIGURE 2.1: Aboriginal population growth by province between 2001 and 2011.**



**FIGURE 2.2: Proportion of the population with a university degree.**

In spite of the economic and legal necessity to ensure access to education for Aboriginal peoples, funding for their education has remained stagnant for over a decade. The participation rates in post-secondary education can be attributed to the significant and complex barriers to access that Aboriginal students face.

Research has found that Aboriginal learners are much more likely to be reluctant to use loan-based programs if they are in financial need. Aboriginal students are also more likely to have dependents which results in high costs due to childcare and relocation, as well as a higher likelihood of entering post-secondary education at a later age than non-Aboriginal Canadians.

Additionally, approximately 20 percent of the First Nations population is unemployed, including a staggering 41 percent of those in the 15-24 year age group. Unemployment limits financial resources for families to pay for the rising costs of college or university education.

Currently, the federal government provides financial assistance to status First Nations and Inuit students through the Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP), which was created to facilitate access to post-secondary education by alleviating the financial barriers faced by Aboriginal students by covering the costs of tuition fees, books, supplies, travel, and living expenses.

In 1968, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC), formerly the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, began providing direct funding for First Nations and Inuit students to pursue post-secondary education. In 1977-78, only 3,600 students received funding; by 1999-2000, over 27,000 students were federal funding recipients. Nevertheless, educational attainment levels of Aboriginal peoples remained significantly lower than the overall population (Figure 1.7).

Before 1992, funding was determined by the number of eligible students and their expenses. Between 1992 and 1997, the model shifted from per-student funding to block funding, which was to be administered by local Band Councils. In 1996, increases in funding to the PSSSP were capped at two percent annually. As a result of this limit on increases, funding has been unable to keep pace with annual increases in the cost of living and tuition fees—which increased on average by three percent this year. While approximately 27,000 Aboriginal students received financial assistance prior to the implementation of the funding cap, the number of students fell to under 19,000 by 2009.

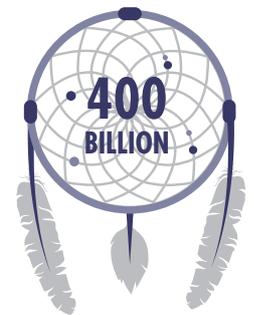
The lack of funding has meant that communities administering the funds must make difficult decisions about who receives funding each year. Between 2006 and 2011, over 18,500 people were denied funding—roughly half of those who qualified. Because of the shortfall in funding, priority is often given to shorter college programs—to the detriment of those interested in pursuing more expensive professional or graduate programs of study.

According to the Assembly of First Nations, a total of \$724 million is required to ensure that no Aboriginal student is denied access to post-secondary education due to financial barriers, and that those students who are funded receive an adequate level of support. As AANDC currently provides \$306 million, an additional \$418 million would be required. This funding would support a total of approximately 40,000 students across Canada.

The funding disbursed through the PSSSP has a proven track record for those who can access it. Most Aboriginal students who are able to receive funding through the PSSSP succeed in completing their studies and go on to find meaningful work. Regardless of their place of residence, the majority of Aboriginal graduates return to work in their communities and are employed in their field of study, achieving economic self-reliance and helping to develop healthy and stable communities while improving the Canadian economy.

It is important to note that although the economic return for those who are able to access education is high, there is no federal funding support provided for non-status First Nations and Métis students, in addition to funding restrictions currently impacting Aboriginal learners. As the situation currently stands, this limits the potential for this population as well as Canada's well being as a whole.

**The potential GDP contribution of Aboriginal Canadians over the next twenty years if Aboriginal education levels rose to match those of the general population:**



**The cost per year to raise Aboriginal education levels to match those of the general population:**



## ACCOUNTABILITY FOR FEDERAL FUNDING NEEDED

The federal government has minimised its responsibility to ensure that federal funds for social programs are used as intended and as a result, provincial governments have been free to misallocate federal transfers intended for post-secondary education. Although the federal government is one of the single largest sources of funding for post-secondary education, there is no mechanism to ensure that the monies transferred to provincial governments actually make it into the post-secondary system.

Under previous federal-provincial cost-sharing models, the provinces had to invest their own funds in order to receive federal monies. If a provincial government chose to cut funding, federal transfers were reduced by a proportionate amount. The current block-funding model—the Canada Social Transfer—has no requirement that provincial governments maintain their funding in order to receive federal money.

Indeed, there have been numerous examples of provinces receiving additional federal funds that then reduce their own contribution. For example, in 2008, the Government of British Columbia cut funding to universities by \$50 million in the same year that it received over \$110 million in new post-secondary education funding from the federal government. Due to variations in provincial funding and policies, tuition fees differ greatly from province to province (Figure 1.3).

To return to a level of federal funding equivalent to the level before the cuts of the mid-nineties would

mean a dedicated post-secondary education transfer to the provinces of approximately \$4.9 billion.

The federal government currently allocates just over \$3.5 billion as part of the social transfer; however, there is no guarantee for the provinces to spend this money on increasing access to post-secondary education. Since the funding cuts in the early 1990s, full-time enrolment has increased 24.85%, resulting in an increase of \$637 million in costs to the system that are yet to be addressed by the federal government.

Additionally, similar to the health care system, university and college-related costs increase at a much higher rate than the standard consumer price index. Over the previous eighteen years there has been, on average, an annual post-secondary education-related inflation of three per cent, per year, or about \$1.7 billion over that period. When compared to current federal funding levels, there is a funding gap of approximately \$2.3 billion.

The adoption of a post-secondary education act would establish conditions on the provinces for receiving post-secondary education transfers payments. Such legislation would require provinces to uphold principles similar to those found in the Canada Health Act: public administration, comprehensiveness, universality, portability, and accessibility. In return for upholding these principles, provincial governments would receive adequate and predictable funding from the federal government.

## RECOMMENDATION 1

Prioritise alleviating the education-related debt loads burdening Canadians and encourage an economically competitive work force by:

- ▶ increasing the value and number of non-repayable grants available to students by redirecting funds allocated to education-related tax credits and savings schemes to the Canada Student Grants Program;
- ▶ removing the funding cap on increases to the Post-Secondary Student Support Program and ensure that every eligible First Nations, Inuit, and Métis learner is provided funding; and
- ▶ protecting the investments made in Canada's post-secondary education system by implementing a federal Post-Secondary Education Act in cooperation with the provinces, modeled after the Canada Health Act, accompanied by a dedicated cash transfer.

## ADVANCING RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

In order for Canada to remain economically competitive at a global level, it must secure its status as a centre for research and innovation. Investment in graduate studies provides the foundation for long-term innovation and trains the highly skilled workers and researchers needed to respond to the economic and social challenges that Canada faces now and will face in the future.

Enrolment in graduate studies increased by 56.5 percent between 2002 and 2012. Despite this, there have only been modest funding increases to the federal research granting councils and scholarships. The stagnation in federal funding for research and graduate education limits the number of masters and doctoral students that receive grants, thus limiting the pool of highly skilled researchers to those who are able to afford it personally or who are able to secure limited institutional or industry funding.

In spite of the relatively high number of university graduates, Canada ranks second-to-last among peer countries for PhD graduation rates, notwithstanding a dramatic expansion of graduate studies over the last ten years.



+56% ENROLMENT  
IN GRADUATE STUDIES  
BETWEEN 2002-2012

## COMMERCIALISATION OF RESEARCH

Recent federal budgets have directed research funding to meet the short-term priorities of the private sector, undermining basic research and long-term innovation. The drive to commercialise university research has far-reaching consequences—from limiting academic freedom and public ownership of research, to discouraging private market innovation.

Since the late 1990s, a number of initiatives have been undertaken to bend public university infrastructure to meet the government's commercialisation objectives, such as requiring publicly-funded research to secure direct, private sector investment.

University research geared towards commercialisation is focused on generating products that may yield short-term results, with little consideration of long-term research and innovation goals. As research funding is increasingly directed in this way, basic research and academic pursuits are undermined.

Recent increases in funding for the federal research granting councils, especially those resources dedicated to graduate students, have disproportionately benefited applied research programs that are designed to pursue a commercialised research agenda over basic, curiosity-driven research.

Shifting the motivation for university research away from the public interest and towards commercial interests has resulted in the private sector increasingly relying on public infrastructure at universities for research and development, rather than investing in their own infrastructure. This dependence contributes to lower private sector investment in research and development in Canada than in comparable countries. Canada has fallen from 22<sup>nd</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> in the world for private-sector spending on research in the last 5 years, according to the 2014 World Economic Forum annual competitiveness report.



22<sup>ND</sup> TO 27<sup>TH</sup>  
IN RESEARCH SPENDING

Discouraging private sector investment in its own research and development facilities leads to fewer employment opportunities for graduates in an already difficult job market. The result of this restructuring is that many highly skilled workers are often unable to contribute their full potential, thus undermining Canada's global economic competitiveness.

Canada has consistently ranked low on measurements of innovation. The World Economic Forum highlighted the need for Canada to increase the sophisticated and innovative nature of private sector research and development. This year, Canada was ranked 15<sup>th</sup> for the quality of scientific research institutions – a sharply declining trend over the past five years from Canada's 2009 ranking of fourth.

As this trend continues, private sector research and development infrastructure is being replaced with a publicly-backed university system that is forced to advance private sector research, a collaboration that does not have a consistent track-record of successfully bringing innovations to the marketplace. Since 2009, Canada has slipped from 18<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> in its capacity for innovation. The private sector's encroachment on universities undermines the independence of the academy, as money for research is increasingly tied to entities outside the academic system. These corporations often influence decisions that are normally left to the research community, such as investment in maintenance, research facilities, and new infrastructure. The research community can also come under pressure from private funders of research when outcomes are not commercially

favourable for those funders. Despite the threat to the independence of university research resulting from an increased reliance upon industry sponsorship, there is currently no whistleblower protection for graduate students who wish to report research misconduct.

## RECOMMENDATION 2

Remove targeted research funding earmarks within the granting councils and award research funding based on academic merit determined through a peer review process. Increase the number of Canada Graduate Scholarships to be consistent with average program growth and distribute them proportionally among the research councils according to enrolment figures.

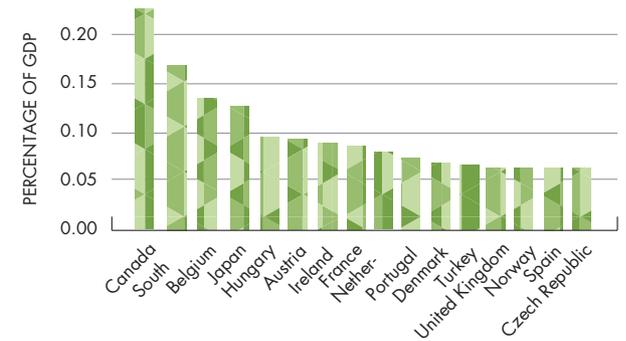


FIGURE 3.1: Indirect government support for research and development through tax incentives.

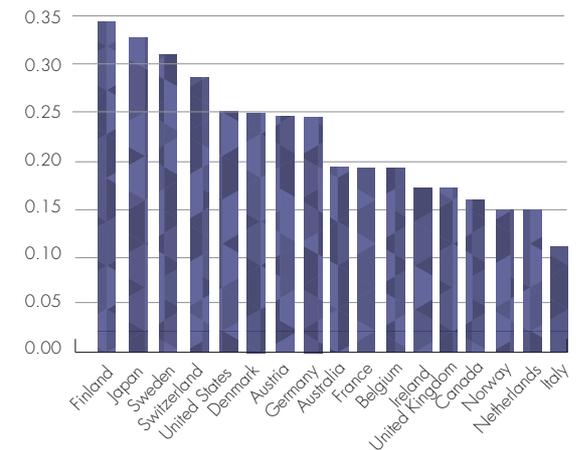
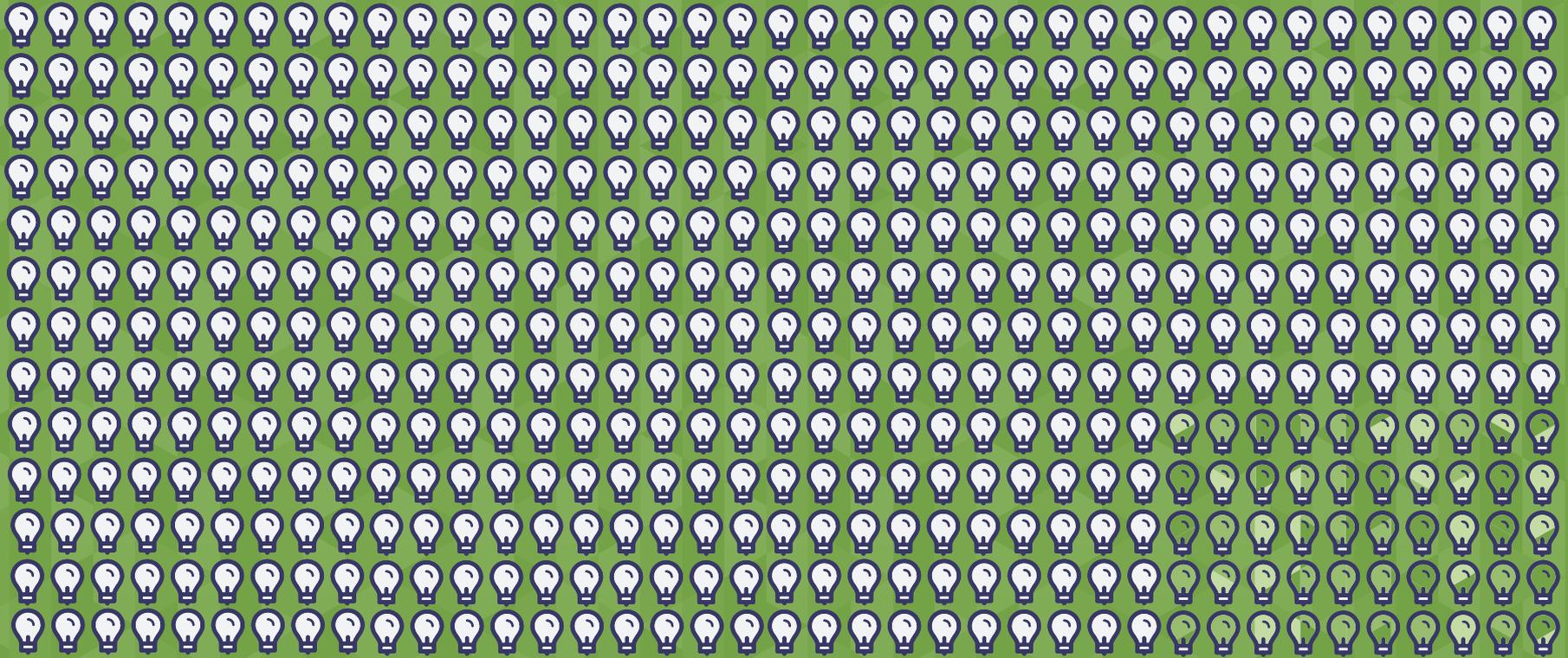


FIGURE 3.2: business expenditures on research and development (as a share of GDP).



The Centres of Excellence for Commercialization Research (CECR)—the network established by the federal government to bring together industry and academia—has reviewed 500 publicly funded projects over the last ten years. Of these, only 80 were identified for commercial viability and, of those, only 40 moved forward. This means that 460 commercially-driven research programs, funded by the public, failed to produce commercially viable results.

## TRACKING SUCCESS: EDUCATION STATISTICS

Collectively, the federal and provincial governments spend billions of dollars each year on post-secondary education, but adequate data to fully analyse the effectiveness of that spending are not collected. A recent OECD report noted that Canada does not provide sufficient post-secondary education indicators used to compare countries. Although the Council of Ministers of Education has started to fund the collection of some of the missing data, it is not a sustainable solution to the federal government's underfunding of the education branch of Canada's national statistical agency, nor does it make up for the entire shortfall.

Canada does not currently collect information about the age of students when they enter or leave the post-secondary education system, nor are data collected on completion rates for higher education or the average length that a student spends in the

post-secondary system. In a more general sense, Canada lacks much of the data regarding both the inputs and outcomes of the post-secondary education system.

In May 2010, the Department of Employment and Social Development (formerly Human Resources and Skills Development Canada) announced that it would cease funding the Youth in Transition Survey (YITS) and the National Longitudinal Survey on Children and Youth. These studies are primary sources of information about who pursues post-secondary education and who does not. Among other things, they provide vital information on students, their first post-graduation interaction with the labour market, and the relationship between education and employment. The YITS results are necessary for fulfilling Canada's international

commitment to provide the OECD with comparable data on post-secondary education.

Without sufficient data, it is impossible for governments to make informed decisions about post-secondary education policies and priorities. The absence of this information makes it extremely difficult to conduct further research regarding Canada's post-secondary education system.

While the impact of discontinuing this research is significant, the amount of funding necessary to properly conduct research on students and the post-secondary system is relatively small. An increase of \$10 million, less than 0.3 percent of what the federal government spends on post-secondary education, would establish the resources needed to undertake this research.



FIGURE 3.5: The number of education-related indicators Canada collects for assessment by the OECD has declined significantly.

# TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT FOR YOUTH AND GRADUATES

Over the last five years, high youth unemployment has been a constant challenge in the Canadian labour market. Investing in post-secondary education should be the primary vehicle for reducing youth unemployment. Across all OECD countries, individuals with a post-secondary education degree had an unemployment rate of 4.8 percent in 2011 compared to 12.6 percent for those who hadn't completed post-secondary education.

Between 2008 and 2011 the gap in the unemployment rate between these two groups widened; the unemployment rate for post-secondary degree holders rose just 1.5 percent compared to 3.8 percent for individuals whose highest level of education was at the secondary level.

**“The labour market advantage of obtaining a higher level university education may be fading away for youth”**

STATISTICS CANADA  
Labour Force Survey,  
September 2013



## YOUTH UN/UNDER-EMPLOYMENT

Demand for highly educated workers in Canada is being stunted by ongoing cuts to public services, the continuing impact of the manufacturing crisis, and an overreliance on resource extraction for employment growth.

Youth often face the most hardship during economic upheaval. According to Statistics Canada, Canadians between the ages of 15 and 24 have long been struggling under more challenging economic conditions than their older counterparts. While accounting for only 16.5 percent of the country's workforce, young Canadians accounted for more than half of all net job losses during the recession.

Young job-seekers face a quagmire, as they are forced to compete for ever-decreasing job opportunities, in part due to the delayed retirement of baby boomers forced to push off leaving the work force as a result of an unstable economic period. They are, therefore, frequently unable to acquire the necessary experience required to secure jobs in a market flooded with experienced individuals who were let go due to cuts.

Furthermore, finding a position that could help alleviate that financial burden is made more difficult by the dearth of summer jobs and other roles that could help build a young person's resume.

The number of youth who can find only part-time work and the population who have stopped looking for a job because they believed that suitable employment is unavailable has increased substantially. If part-time employees seeking fulltime jobs, unpaid interns, and discouraged young Canadians are taken into account, the youth un-/underemployment rate is 27.7 percent.

In addition, workers who are underemployed often suffer an erosion or loss of skills, knowledge, and abilities, diminished current and life-long income, job dissatisfaction and emotional distress. Beyond the individual hardship there are also consequences for the country's economy, as underemployment diminishes the potential level of the country's overall well-being.

## UNPAID INTERNSHIPS

As a result of high youth unemployment, young people are forced into taking unpaid, and sometimes illegal, internships in order to gain relevant work experience. Increasing tuition fees, compounded with the prevalence of unpaid internships, result in the fact that it is even more difficult for students to afford post-secondary education. However, for many college and university students, working without an income is not an option and relevant experience is hard to find.

For those who can afford to pursue unpaid internships, many are disappointed to find that their work consists largely of menial or entry-level tasks that would otherwise be done by a paid employee. Often, unpaid interns find it difficult to know and protect their rights in the workplace or to file a formal complaint against workplace misconduct. Although Canada does not track the number of unpaid internships, it is estimated that there are as many as 300,000 per year. Furthermore, there is very little infrastructure available to enforce the legal restrictions on unpaid internships, and employers who break the law almost never face the consequences.

More broadly, the prevalence of unpaid internships is harmful to Canada's economy. The reliance on unpaid work reduces the availability of entry-level jobs and provides employers with a disincentive for investing in on-the-job training. This increased dependence on precarious and temporary work places more financial risk onto workers while closing opportunities for career growth.



**“the earnings loss due to the rise in youth unemployment is equivalent to \$10.7 billion”**

MARTIN SCHWERDTFEGER  
Senior Economist, TD Economics

## LOOKING ABROAD FOR SOLUTIONS IN CANADA

When young Canadians struggle to find work, they are often met with rhetoric around 'skills shortages', a 'skills gap', and 'useless/ worthless degrees'. While many would attempt to blame a 'skills gap' for young Canadians struggling in labour market, there is no evidence to support this claim.

As of July 2014, there were 6.2 unemployed people for every job vacancy. Furthermore, despite claiming young Canadians aren't getting the right skills and training they need, employer spending for on-the-job-training has dropped 40 percent since the early 1990s.

The most recent OECD report on education and training found that roughly 7.3 percent of 15-19 year olds and 14.8 percent of 20-24 year olds in Canada are not employed and not in education. Looking abroad, there are successful approaches to addressing issues of young people getting the education they need to succeed, and employers taking a significant role in training. One of the most successful models is Germany's Dual Vocational Training System (VET).

Germany's dual model for vocational training relies on strong, structured communication and cooperation between the education system, employers, and labour unions. These relationships are legislated and heavily regulated, and the rights of young Germans are protected in legislation such as The Vocational Education and Training Act, Protection of Working Mothers Act, and The Protection of Young Workers Act



**15-19 YEAR OLDS**  
**7.3% UNEMPLOYED**

**20-24 YEAR OLDS**  
**14.8% UNEMPLOYED**

Young Germans have the ability to receive training that is fully funded by the public in roughly 350 different vocations. To receive their training, and reduce the risk of getting trained and then entering unemployment, young Germans enter the training system through an employer. After completion of secondary school, German youth apply to a company for an apprentice position. Once a position is found, the individual enters the dual training system. The model is often characterized by three to four days a week at the company receiving on-the-job training and work, and the remaining days spent at the vocational school, receiving theoretical knowledge.

Unlike in Canada, where an estimated 300,000 young Canadians work for free in unpaid internships, German employers pay vocational students. On average, German vocational students receive a monthly training allowance of roughly \$930.00 (CAN).

Upon completion of their training, German vocational graduates often enter the workforce at the company that helped fund their training. As well, the strong regulatory framework around the training ensures that the skills learned are transferable, and the students also receive state certification in their field which allows graduates the ability to find employment elsewhere.

As a result of their dual training model, Germany boasts some of the lowest levels of youth unemployment. The OECD reports that only 3.0 percent of 15-19 year olds, and 11.2 percent of 20-24 year old Germans were in the NEET classification. Beyond the individual impact, the system has in part, helped lead Germany to its status as an economic powerhouse. Germany is the only G7 nation where employment in manufacturing has not significantly decreased, and the World Economic Forum recently ranked it 5th in the world for economic competitiveness.

## RECOMMENDATION 3

Double the annual investment in the Youth Employment Strategy to ensure program effectiveness and develop a strategy, modeled after the German Dual System of Vocational Education to increase the employment and training opportunities for Canada's youth.



**Unlike in Canada, where an estimated 300,000 young Canadians are forced to work for free in unpaid internships, German employers pay vocational students.**

## POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION: A NECESSARY INVESTMENT

With an additional annual investment of \$2.88 billion, and the adoption of a post-secondary education act, the federal government could ensure that the Canadian public post-secondary education system remains accessible and of high quality.

### Cost of Proposals:

(Amounts in millions)

Creation of new post-secondary education act:	\$0
Addressing tuition fee increases:	\$1,376*
Addressing costs of enrolment increases:	\$724
Shift funding from tax credits and saving schemes to upfront grants:	\$0
Increase funding for Aboriginal education:	\$418
Increase the number of Canada Graduate scholarships:	\$25
Increase funding to Statistics Canada Centre for education statistics:	\$10
Double the annual investment in the Youth Employment Strategy:	\$330
Develop a national strategy to address youth employment:	\$0
Total Annual Investment:	\$2,883

\* Funding to reduce tuition fees across Canada to 1992 levels.



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