



TURNING *the* PAGE

UPDATING BC'S POST-SECONDARY SYSTEM FOR TODAY'S WORK AND LEARNING

A submission to the Select Standing Committee
on Finance and Government Services

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FPSE

Federation of
Post-Secondary Educators
of BC

INTRODUCTION

BC's century-old post-secondary system stands at a crossroads: the time has come to turn the page on the creeping privatization of post-secondary and keep focus on the delivery of affordable, comprehensive, and sustainable access to post-secondary education for all British Columbians.

Any publicly funded system should be subject to review with the question: are the desired system outcomes being achieved? In terms of post-secondary, is BC providing the highest quality education possible, accessed by the greatest number of BC students? Our analysis shows more can be done to improve post-secondary accessibility and outcomes.

THREE KEY CHALLENGES ARE:

- Sustainable funding
- Fair employment
- Decolonization

FUNDING

Since a 1996 tuition freeze¹ was lifted in 2001,² the composition of post-secondary institutions' funding has changed dramatically.

The percentage of government funding (in the form of operating grants) has dropped from 70-80% of the institutions' overall budget to below 50% at a growing number of institutions. Tuition revenues have increased over 400% since 2002 due to the combination of rapid tuition increase, the growth in international student numbers, and in the increased tuition international students are charged.³

The last serious funding review took place in the early 2000s, when block funding replaced formula funding and tuition doubled in two years. Despite a 2% cap on domestic tuition increases since 2004, tuition revenues have more than quadrupled and in 2017 equalled government operating grants to institutions: \$1.831 billion compared to \$1.828 billion. The government anticipates tuition revenue to top \$2 billion this year.⁴

As predictable institution funding dropped, pressure on service delivery (local learning centres and course offerings) increased. The impacts of unreliable funding are not confined to the balance sheet: they directly affect institutional hiring and employment terms, and student program costs. Rural colleges, once comprehensive community colleges offering a full suite of course options, have dramatically reduced program offerings, limiting local education and training options.

Some changes to the funding model have been made, but the consequences of past decisions are still reverberating throughout the system: when policy is changed without corresponding funding, the policy is undermined and resources are strained. BC's review of the post-secondary system was summarized in the *Campus 2020* report, which made 52 recommendations. While some policy changes were introduced with funding, there are several examples where policy was changed without supporting funds.

INSTITUTIONAL REVENUE SOURCES

Year	Gov't operating grant revenue	Tuition revenue	Other revenue
1997	80%	15%	5%
2017	44.5%	36.8%	18.6%

One example is the conversion of university colleges into teaching universities. When institutions were converted in 2008, little funding accompanied the announcements. Eleven years later, Capilano University remains underfunded because it is mandated to provide the same service as other teaching universities, but without the same funding base as other teaching universities, such as Kwantlen University, Vancouver Island University, the University of the Fraser Valley, and Emily Carr University of Art and Design.

FPSE recommends the government conduct a funding review of post-secondary with broad consultation of faculty and staff to find a better funding model.

- 1 BC Ministry of Finance. (1996). Budget 96. Retrieved from the Ministry of Finance website: <http://www.fin.gov.bc.ca/archive/budget96/brochure.htm>
- 2 Erika Shaker & David Macdonald. (2015). *What's the Difference? Taking Stock of Provincial Tuition Fee Policies*. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. Retrieved from https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/National%20Office/2015/09/Whats_the_Difference.pdf
- 3 British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education. (2012). *British Columbia's International Education Strategy*. Retrieved from the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia website: https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/post-secondary-education/international-education/internationaleducationstrategy_web.pdf
- 4 *BC Budget 2018: Working for You. Budget and Fiscal Plan 2018/19 – 2020/21*, p. 140; and *Operating Grants by Institution, Fiscal Years 2001/02 to 2017/18* (Ministry of Advanced Education, April 2018).

AFFORDABILITY

Analysis of student affordability measures reveals that federal funding in the form of tax credits and RESPs favour learners whose families are already in higher income brackets.⁵ It is reasonable to expect this relationship to extend to provincial funding as well. When financial barriers are removed, access to post-secondary education increases, as shown by the removal of tuition for Adult Basic Education (ABE), English Language Learning, and the expansion of tuition waivers for former youth in care.

Enrollment in adult basic education programs suffered a devastating blow when tuition-fees were introduced in 2015. The \$1600 per term tuition on developmental programs resulted in enrollment drops by as much as 60% at some institutions. With tuition removed, enrollment is increasing. We believe there will be similar benefits⁶ in removing tuition barriers to all developmental programs.

Former ABE students were asked if they had ever had to stop their studies due to financial reasons – 15 percent said that they had. This has increased since 2012, when 12 percent reported having to take a break from their studies.

Age had an impact on ABE respondents' pursuit of their education—older respondents were more likely to have taken a break from their studies for financial reasons.⁷

The broader student population has seen a steady increase in student debt caused by increased post-secondary costs, and cost of living increases. The average graduate is understood to carry around \$30,000 in student debt after completing four years of post-secondary studies, but our sampling shows that number is understated. Two of our federation members surveyed current and former students to

measure their debt against the average: at Okanagan College, they found one student who had amassed \$89,000 in debt; at the University of the Fraser Valley, another student's debt totalled \$169,000.

While FPSE encourages tuition waivers and open textbooks, we also support student unions in their calls for broad policies to reduce both financial barriers and debt load for all BC learners, recognizing that income and employment fluctuate in today's job market. People often need training or upgrading the most when they can afford it the least, reinforcing the importance of non-repayable grants and loans.

“Education and training will play an increasingly important role in the labour market outlook over the next 10 years. The focus in training is moving away from training for a specific job. Instead it has shifted to recognize the value and importance of learning skills for a career. Having a broader base of knowledge and being adaptable opens up more job opportunities for students and workers.”⁸

⁵ Federal Parliamentary Budget Office, Federal Spending on Post-Secondary Education. 2016

⁶ British Columbia Statistics. (2015). 2014 Developmental Student Outcomes Survey: report of findings. Retrieved from <http://outcomes.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/Files/58e1a08e-00b0-488d-bb10-00413c82ecc7/2014DevelopmentalStudentOutcomesSurveyReportofFindings.pdf>

⁷ British Columbia Statistics. (2015). 2014 Developmental Student Outcomes Survey: report of findings. Retrieved from <http://outcomes.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/Files/58e1a08e-00b0-488d-bb10-00413c82ecc7/2014DevelopmentalStudentOutcomesSurveyReportofFindings.pdf>

⁸ 2017 Labour Market Statistics, p. 10 (https://www.workbc.ca/getmedia/12e9c92b-172a-47ee-bdfa-261b06efc37c/BC_Labour_Market_Outlook_2017_English.PDF.aspx)

INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

The exchange of ideas and perspectives made possible by international education has many benefits – in classrooms, campuses, and communities – but the growing reliance on this now-booming economic sector begs two questions: will our public post-secondary system be able to withstand a bust,⁹ and how is this system serving British Columbians?

We must ensure that international students either have on their arrival in Canada, or acquire after their arrival, sufficient language, literacy, social support, and academic skills to meet the course admittance requirements. International education must be structured to provide ongoing supports for enrolled international students to give them a fair chance to succeed. In a sector that has undergone rapid change, the responsible course, financially and socially, is to compare our system with other regions with a view to finding a balance for BC.

It is heartening that this government is developing “a renewed strategic approach to international education focused on positive student experience and not just enrolment numbers,”¹⁰ as there is certainly a path forward that keeps the system on solid financial

footing while welcoming learners from abroad. In recognition of the depth and complexity of this issue, FPSE encourages the government to form a broad stakeholder group to investigate and discuss all aspects of fairness for international students during this review, from tuition, to recruiters, to educational and social supports, as well as the impacts on class composition, educator workloads, and the costs for international and domestic students at public and private post-secondary institutions.

The financial and human resources required for institutions to engage in the recruiting process must also be reviewed, including deals with agents, placement tests, the potential to mislead non-English speaking students, and the high (and unregulated) fees.

Information from a review of international post-secondary education may identify policies and practices to protect international students and increase affordability and access for domestic students. The benefits of post-secondary education far outweigh the costs;¹¹ government should maximize access and affordability as social and economic investment priorities. It’s time to turn the page on institutions’ operating on a business model based on international students.

⁹ Global Affairs Canada. Roslyn Kunin & Associates, Inc., 2017. Economic impact of international education in Canada – 2017 update. Retrieved from Global Affairs Canada website <http://www.international.gc.ca/education/report-rapport/impact-2017/index.aspx?lang=eng>

¹⁰ Britten, Liam. (2018, July). B.C. economy would take hit if province lost international students, report says. CBC. Retrieved from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/b-c-international-students-1.4741913>

¹¹ Manitoba Institute for Policy Research. (2014) Financing Post-Secondary Education. Retrieved from: financingpse.ca/index.php/students/benefits-post-secondary-education

PRECARIOUS WORK

Post-secondary underfunding also affects faculty and staff. The increase in precarious, low-wage academic work impairs the delivery of a high quality, fair post-secondary system. Just as in BC, reduced government education funding for institutions has led to increased contract faculty employment across the country. (Government funding for post-secondary has dropped to 50% from 80% since 1985).¹² Sessional or part-time faculty have made little progress since regularization was negotiated in the late 1990s, as employers have found many ways to subvert it.

Full-time, tenure-track teaching positions are being replaced by sessional instructor positions with much lower pay, fewer benefits, and little job security. Some sessional instructors have worked for over 20 years, but still need to apply for their job every four months. In 2013, 27 per cent of university professors and 24 per cent of college professors were in temporary positions. Across the sector, the proportion of temporary workers has grown steadily since 2000.¹³

Contract faculty now make up approximately 70% of college faculty in Ontario;¹⁴ this extraordinarily high percentage of precarious work contributed to the longest college strike in Ontario's history last fall, which concluded in educators being legislated back to work. The resulting arbitration granted workers a pay increase and created a government task force to make recommendations on faculty complement and precarious work. Ontario has also addressed precarious work through legislation to remove the discriminatory wage differentials: Bill 148 obligated employers to provide equal pay for work of equal value.

Contract faculty teach approximately 30% of the courses at B.C.'s college and teaching universities. However, the rapid acceleration of contract educators is a clear indication that unless action is taken, BC may well be on the same path as Ontario.

"It takes a very heavy emotional toll on you," said Andrea Eidinger, who has spent eight years teaching on contract at universities and colleges in British Columbia. "I basically have to reapply for my job every four months."

For this, Eidinger said she gets paid less than minimum wage, as contract faculty salaries don't take into account time spent preparing courses, marking or emailing students outside office hours.¹⁵

¹² Canadian Union of Public Employees, 2018. Post-Secondary Education: Our Time to Act. Retrieved from https://cupe.ca/sites/cupe/files/backgrounder_1_pse_federal_funding_2018_08_31_en.pdf

¹³ Canadian Union of Public Employees, 2016. Organizing for Success: Post-Secondary. Retrieved from: https://cupe.ca/sites/cupe/files/nsc_post-secondary_2016_eng_final.pdf

¹⁴ Greenberg, Paula, Malak, Rawan, Grawey, Chris & Riley, Silviu (2017, October). College students and striking faculty face same challenges with precarious work. Toronto Star. Retrieved from: <https://www.thestar.com/opinion/commentary/2017/10/26/college-students-and-striking-faculty-face-same-challenges-with-precarious-work.html>

¹⁵ Hauen, Jack. Contract faculty at Canadian universities struggle to make ends meet, survey finds. Toronto Star. Retrieved from: <https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2018/09/03/contract-faculty-at-canadian-universities-struggle-to-make-ends-meet-survey-finds.html>

DECOLONIZATION AND RECONCILIATION

Underfunding also impacts efforts to decolonize our post-secondary system and close the enrollment gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students.¹⁶ Only eleven institutions (out of twenty-five) have Aboriginal Service Plans, and budgetary pressures can hamper decolonization efforts. Institutional funding needs to be increased across the system and aimed at fulfilling our commitment to reconciliation at all post-secondary institutions in BC.

Every student cohort represents an opportunity for learners to gain knowledge and understanding of the residential school system and Indigenous history – key steps in moving forward towards reconciliation in BC.

63. We call upon the federal, provincial, and territorial governments, in consultation and collaboration with Survivors, Aboriginal peoples, and educators, to:

ii. Provide the necessary funding to post-secondary institutions to educate teachers on how to integrate Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods into classrooms.

*CALL TO ACTION 63.2
OF THE TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION*

¹⁶ British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education. (2018). Aboriginal Learners in British Columbia's Public Post-Secondary System. Retrieved from: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/post-secondary-education/aboriginal-education-training/aboriginallearnerdatareport-june2018.pdf>

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As is expected from a system serving complex, changing student needs in a diverse, geographically varied province, finding a sustainable funding system serving all BC learners presents a challenge. However, there is widespread agreement among stakeholders that the current funding system is imperfect and creates challenges in delivering a fair, affordable, sustainable post-secondary education to all learners.

While the recommendations below focus on individual measures intended to address post-secondary affordability, accessibility and sustainability, a consideration and review of funding with broad consultation of faculty is also recommended.

Consultation

- FPSE encourages the government to form a broad stakeholder group to investigate and discuss all aspects of fairness for international students during the formation of a new strategic approach to international education including: tuition, recruiters, educational and social supports, and the impacts of international education on class composition, educator workloads, and the costs of attending post-secondary for international and domestic students.

Affordability

- Make all developmental programs tuition-free and extend the ABE/ELL AUG policy for students taking non-ABE/ELL developmental programs to access the AUG.
- FPSE supports the student unions in calling for broad policies that can reduce financial barriers and student debt for BC learners through non-repayable grants, further reduced student loan interest rates, and the increased availability of open textbooks.

Precarious work

- Work with all stakeholders to reduce institutional reliance on precarious academic labour and to ensure contract faculty are provided with a fair wage and fair working conditions.

Reconciliation

- Implement the calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, including those pertaining to post-secondary education such as call 63.2: to fund professional development for educators to integrate Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods into classrooms



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