

STUDENT FINANCIAL AID



RECOMMENDATION:

That the Federal Government continue to **fund the Post-Secondary Student Support Program beyond 2024.**

UCRU champions the principle that every Canadian citizen should enjoy equal opportunities and access to quality post-secondary education. Central to this commitment is our endorsement of a critical step towards reconciliation for Indigenous students. While we acknowledge the \$320 million allocation pledge for the Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP) from 2019 to 2024, UCRU advocates for an extension beyond this figure. At this time, there is limited funding and high demand for the PSSSP and University and College Entrance Preparation Program (UCEPP), resulting in First Nations and Inuit students being waitlisted for sponsorship or assistance to access post-secondary institutions. Modifications to PSSSP funding elevates educational attainment labels for Indigenous students. This initiative will close existing institutional and education gaps that hinder Indigenous students from accessing available support when enrolling in post-secondary institutions (Aboriginal Learning Links, 2022)¹⁴. Such an enhancement in funding is particularly pertinent and resonates with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action 7 and 11. The rising number of Indigenous students on campuses across Canada reinforces this need.

CITATIONS:

Aboriginal Learning Links. "Band Sponsorship." Aboriginal Learning Links, 29 June 2022, aboriginallearning.ca/band-sponsorship/.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Federal Government **maintain the increase to \$4,200/year maximum** on the Canada Student Grants program from the previous pre-COVID-19 maximum of \$3,000/year.

Post-secondary students are facing increasing barriers for accessing post-secondary education in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to recent data from the Labour Force Survey, students between the ages of 20 to 24 experienced a 23.6% fall in the employment rate and 52.5% (Wall, et. Al., 2020)¹⁵. The effects of the pandemic on post-secondary student job employment and opportunity impacts financial access to post-secondary institutions. Likewise, 50% of postsecondary graduates have a median debt of approximately \$17,500 post-graduation (Wall, et. Al., 2020)¹⁶. Nearly half (47%) of students that participated in the COVID-19 Pandemic: Financial Impacts on Postsecondary Students in Canada study reported extreme concern about student debt as a result of COVID (Wall, et. Al., 2020)¹⁷. With worries from students about covering current expenses and affording tuition costs, UCRU recommends that the government maintain the 40% increase of Canada Student Grants from the 2019/20 pre-pandemic levels beyond July 31, 2024. If the current \$4,200/year maximum on the Canada Student Grants program were reduced, then there could be an immediate risk of students lacking funds to post-secondary institutions, leading to some students dropping out of their studies in the fall.

CITATIONS:

Wall, Katherine, and Tamara Knighton. COVID-19 Pandemic: Financial Impacts on Postsecondary Students in Canada, Government of Canada, Statistics Canada, 15 May 2020, www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/45-28-0001/2020001/article/00016-eng.htm.