

MENTAL HEALTH



RECOMMENDATION:

That the federal government establish a **\$1.5 billion 4-year post-secondary mental health infrastructure fund** (based on the success of the Local Food Infrastructure Fund) to provide capital funding to applicant post-secondary institutions and affiliate student associations to improve access to mental health support networks and programs for students.

Post-secondary students are disproportionately affected by mental health issues. Without early intervention and investments by the federal government and post-secondary institutions, students are more likely to develop severe and enduring health problems during early adulthood. As reported by Health Canada in 2022, during the COVID-19 pandemic students were challenged by “social isolation, virtual learning, job security, and financial hardships” (Health Canada, 2022)¹. Furthermore, Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA) Abacus Data shows that “1 in 3 students reported that mental health services at post-secondary institutions do not meet their diverse needs and that the top barriers to access included wait times and quality of services available” (CASA, et al., 2022)². Additionally, and as mentioned by the Council of Ontario Universities, providing effective mental health support for students at post-secondary institutions is a pressing issue that requires collective action (Council of Ontario Universities, 2023)³.

The Undergraduates of Canadian Research-Intensive Universities (UCRU) urges that the federal government take appropriate fiscal steps to fulfill its platform commitment in the 2021 mandate letter from the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions to introduce a new fund for mental health. The \$500 million over four years mental health fund can support the hiring of new mental health care counselors, increase access to Black and racialized students at post-secondary institutions across Canada, and improve current healthcare issues.

According to CAMH, mental healthcare, especially at post-secondary institutions is underfunded by about \$1.5 billion (Treleaven, 2022)⁴. Through investments in mental healthcare, the federal government can see a positive return on investment for health promotion and illness prevention programs, early intervention processes, scaled-up treatment for mental illnesses like depression and anxiety, and workplace mental health programs (CAMH, 2023)⁵.

CITATIONS:

Health Canada. “Health Canada Provides \$2m to Support Mental Health Project for Post-Secondary Students.” Canada.ca, Government of Canada, 6 May 2022, www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/news/2022/05/health-canada-provides-2m-to-support-mental-health-project-for-post-secondary-students.html.

CASA, et al. “The New Abnormal: New Study Finds Post-Secondary Students Struggling to Manage Mental Health.” CASA, 2022.

Council of Ontario Universities. “Partnering to Promote Mental Wellness on Campus Communities.” Ontario’s Universities, Council of Ontario’s Universities, 7 Dec. 2023, ontariosuniversities.ca/news/mental-wellness-on-campus-communities/.

Treleaven, Sarah. “Inside the Mental Health Crisis at Canadian Universities: Maclean’s Education.” Inside the Mental Health Crisis at Canadian Universities | Maclean’s Education, Maclean’s education, 14 Nov. 2022, education.macleans.ca/feature/inside-the-mental-health-crisis-at-canadian-universities/.

CAMH. “Mental Illness and Addiction: Facts and Statistics.” CAMH, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, 2023, www.camh.ca/en/driving-change/the-crisis-is-real/mental-health-statistics.