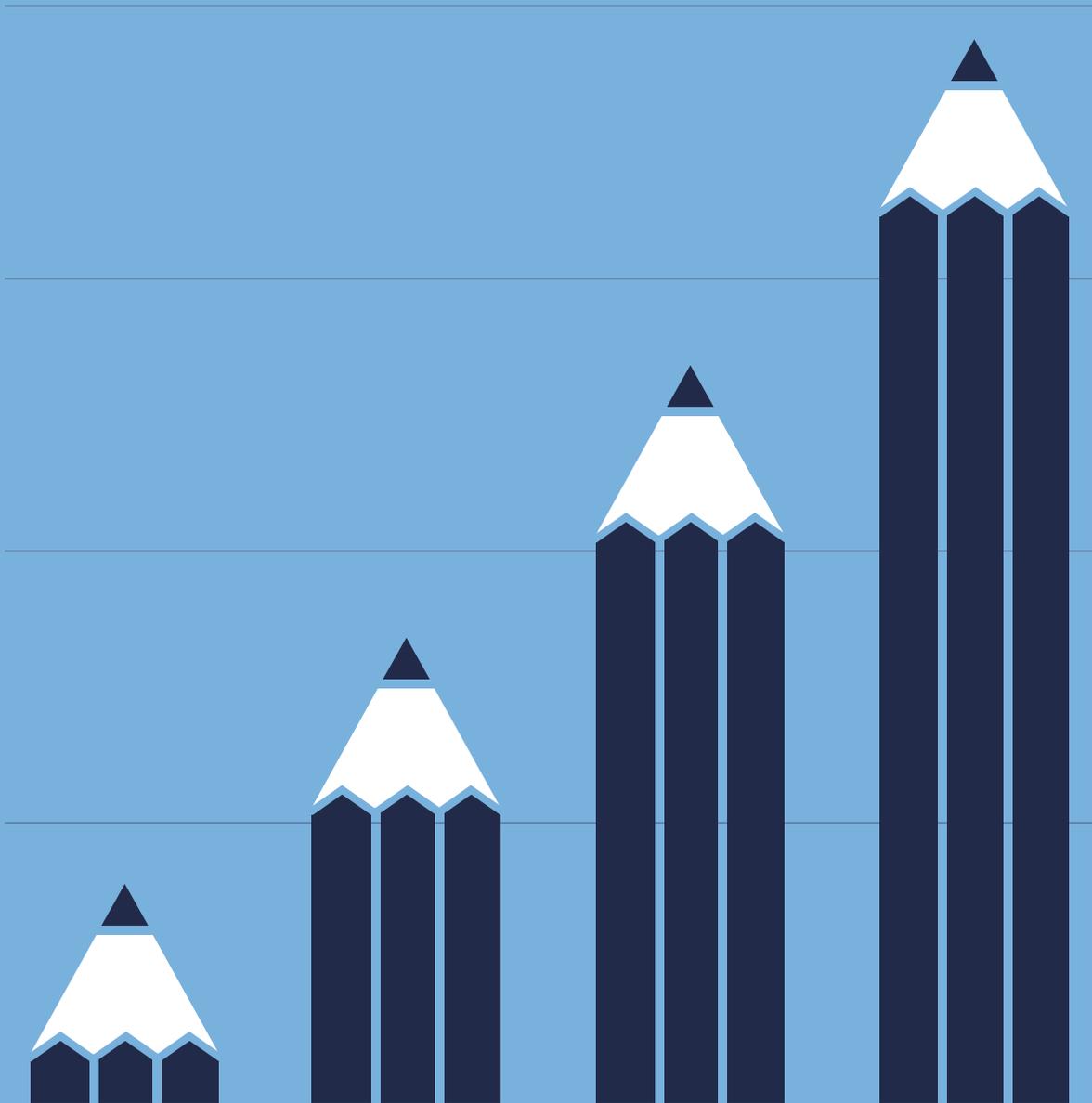


# INVEST IN US

25-26 ADVANCED EDUCATION LOBBYING DOCUMENT



## Land Acknowledgement

Grounded together on Treaty 6 Territory, the traditional territory of the Cree, Saulteaux, Blackfoot, Dene, and Dakota Peoples, and the homeland of the Métis, the University of Saskatchewan Students' Union (USSU) works to reaffirm and strengthen relationships with Indigenous Peoples and communities.

We call upon students, staff, and faculty to recognize the colonial nature of institutionalized knowledge and to consider creative ways in which their education can aid in the ongoing processes of decolonization.

Through coming together in gratitude, humility, and respect for learning, we actively remember and work to dismantle colonialism, institutional racism, and oppression. We will amplify student voices and the voices of the land to build and guide accessible and accountable spaces, transcending colonial binaries and divisions.

In values of sustainability, integrity, and collaboration, we commit to leading, learning, and advocating for all students.

## **Our Vision**

The University of Saskatchewan Students' Union strives to be the recognized leader in enhancing the student experience.

## **Our Mission**

The University of Saskatchewan Students' Union exists to represent, serve and support the academic and non-academic needs of undergraduate students of the University of Saskatchewan through accountable, dynamic and unified leadership. It also serves to protect and maintain the integrity of quality, accessible public education.

## **Our Values**

The following principles shall guide the University of Saskatchewan Students' Union in all of its endeavours: innovation, integrity, mutual respect, professionalism, service, social, economic and environmental responsibility, teamwork, and trust.

## Prepared By

This document was prepared by the 2025-26 USSU Executive Committee, consisting of:

### **Emma Wintermute**

President

She/Her

(306) 966-6965

president@ussu.ca

### **Owen Deis**

Vice-President (Operations & Finance)

He/Him

(306) 966-6967

vpopfin@ussu.ca

### **Norah Jacob**

Vice-President (Academic Affairs)

She/Her

(306) 966-6968

vpacademic@ussu.ca

### **Emily Hubick**

Vice-President (Student Affairs)

She/Her

(306) 966-6970

vpstudentaffairs@ussu.ca

# Recommendations Overview

The future of Saskatchewan is in the hands of its post-secondary students. Supporting post-secondary education is the most effective way to promote impactful research, economic development, and dynamic employment sectors. Students in Saskatchewan deserve pathways to affordable and accessible education, dignified living, and success. We present these recommendations to the Ministry of Advanced Education and the Government of Saskatchewan as priorities for post-secondary education and to support ongoing collaboration with Saskatchewan students to address and alleviate systemic challenges.

## Recommendation One

Involve student leaders in Saskatchewan Post-Secondary Multi-Year Operating Funding Memorandums of Understanding.

## Recommendation Two

Eliminate Saskatchewan Student Loan interest.

## Recommendation Three

Expand access to Open Educational Resources (OERs).

## Recommendation Four

Advocate against the international student cap imposed by Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC).

## Recommendation Five

Increase the availability of scholarships, grants, and bursaries for Indigenous and international students.

## Recommendation Six

Promote and support reviews of sexual violence prevention policies at post-secondary institutions every three years.

## Recommendation Seven

Promote and support reviews of student wage policies at post-secondary institutions every three years.

## Recommendation Eight

Repeal *Bill 137, The Education (Parents' Bill of Rights) Amendment Act, 2023*. Support wrap-around services for Trans youth and gender creative kids, and ensure that third-party sexual health educators can provide resources to classrooms.

## Recommendation Nine

Increase supports for mental health and addictions, with a particular focus on students attending northern and regional colleges.

## Recommendation Ten

Increase funding for and visibility of student housing in urban and rural environments, especially for students who face systemic barriers in pursuing higher education.

## Recommendation One

### ***Involve student leaders in Saskatchewan Post-Secondary Multi-Year Operating Funding Memorandums of Understanding.***

In an increasingly challenging economic reality, students deserve predictability in their tuition prices. To this effect, the government signed the Saskatchewan Post-Secondary Multi-Year Operating Funding Memorandum of Understanding with post-secondary institutions across the province in 2021. In addition to providing stable and predictable funding to post-secondary institutions and ensuring their financial solvency in times of hardship, this four-year agreement capped domestic tuition increases at 4% per year.<sup>1</sup> Despite assurances from the University that affordability is top of mind, students remain concerned that their costs will rise exponentially.

With the announcement of a new MOU in early November that reduces the domestic tuition increase cap from 4% to 3% and offers another four years of funding certainty, we are encouraged by the province's close relationship with its post-secondary education sector.<sup>2</sup> Despite this, post-secondary institutions continue to raise tuition and fees, especially for international students, who are exempt from the agreement. Moreover, with many of these institutions facing financial hardships, important support staff and services are being cut to maintain adequate funding levels.

We are grateful for discussions with the Honourable Ken Cheveldayoff, Minister of Advanced Education, which indicate that the government is keen to continue signing funding MOUs to provide future predictability for students. However, we are troubled by the lack of student representation in negotiating these agreements. To ensure continued access to higher education and to address the financial issues that most closely affect students, we request that student representatives participate in these discussions or that post-secondary leaders consult with the general student body when negotiating these MOUs.

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1. "Saskatchewan Delivers Multi-Year Funding Investment for Post-Secondary Education," Government of Saskatchewan, April 21, 2021, <https://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/news-and-media/2021/april/21/saskatchewan-delivers-multi-year-funding-investment-for-post-secondary-education>.
  2. "USask 2025-26 Tuition Rates Will Enhance Supports, Resources for Students," University of Saskatchewan, April 16, 2025, <https://news.usask.ca/articles/students/2025/usask-2025-26-tuition-rates-will-enhance-supports-resources-for-students.php>; "Saskatchewan Increases Post-Secondary Funding in New Agreement," Government of Saskatchewan, November 3, 2025, <https://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/news-and-media/2025/november/03/saskatchewan-increases-post-secondary-funding-in-new-agreement>.

## Recommendation Two

### ***Eliminate Saskatchewan student loan interest.***

Six provinces, British Columbia, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador, and the federal government have eliminated interest on their portions of student loans.<sup>1</sup> Largely due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, these provinces and the federal government recognized the opportunity to provide students with earlier and clearer financial assistance. Saskatchewan, however, remains one of the few provinces that have not eliminated loan interest, along with Alberta, Quebec, and Ontario.

In the 2017-18 academic year, the Ministry consolidated most provincial financial aid into the Saskatchewan Student Grant.<sup>2</sup> Despite the promise of a streamlined student aid process, the real effect of this consolidation has been a drastic increase in the amount of loans, rather than grants, provided to students. Simplification led to steep cuts in grants and much higher student debt levels. Since 2017-18, loans have replaced grants as the primary source of financial support for students in the province. Although financial aid has outpaced inflation, it has done so only in the form of additional student debt.<sup>3</sup>

The average cost for domestic undergraduate tuition and fees in Saskatchewan is \$9,863.00, and \$33,064 for international undergraduate students. Not only is Saskatchewan's university education more expensive than in many other provinces, but its per-student debt is higher as well. Where the average student debt at graduation from a bachelor's program in Canada was \$30,600 in 2020, it was \$38,700 in Saskatchewan.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Aloysius Wong, "Graduating This Year? Here's What You Need to Know about Repaying Your Student Loans," CBC News, May 30, 2023, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/business/canada-student-loans-repayment-tips-1.6858596#:~:text=British%20Columbia%2C%20Manitoba%2C%20New%20Brunswick,provincial%20portion%20of%20their%20loans.&text=With%20the%20cost%20of%20living,payments%20for%20low%2Dincome%20earners>.
  2. "Students Can Now Apply for the 2017-18 Student Loan Year," Government of Saskatchewan, June 29, 2017, <https://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/news-and-media/2017/june/29/student-loans#:~:text=Students%20will%20know%20well%20in,are%20encouraged%20to%20apply%20early>. Annual Report for 2017-18 (Saskatchewan Ministry of Advanced Education, 2018), 4.
  3. Fund the Future: The State of Saskatchewan's Post-Secondary Sector (Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2023), <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/wp-content/uploads/attachments/Fund-the-future-the-state-of-sk-pse.pdf>, 5, 10-1.

With increasing debt and a minimum wage that does not meet the cost of living, students face significant challenges to affording post-secondary education.<sup>5</sup> While students can easily access funding to cover their educational expenses, post-graduation debt is large in the province, as the majority of this assistance is repayable. With existing repayment assistance and a robust graduate retention program, Saskatchewan is well-versed in incentivizing students to stay. Eliminating loan interest would serve as yet another retention tool.

Especially for a province that prides itself on its commitment to affordable and accessible education and creating a strong economy, it is important to provide post-secondary students with greater incentives to stay and enter the workforce without mountains of debt. It's time the Government of Saskatchewan lived up to its promise to deliver affordability and a robust economy by joining its provincial and federal counterparts in removing interest charges from its portion of the Canada-Saskatchewan Integrated Student Loan Program.<sup>6</sup>

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4. "Table 37-10-0045-01 Canadian and International Tuition Fees by Level of Study (Current Dollars)," Statistics Canada, September 10, 2025, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=3710004501&cubeTimeFrame.startYear=2017+%2F+2018&cubeTimeFrame.endYear=2025+%2F+2026&referencePeriods=20170101%2C20250101>; "Table 37-10-0036-01: Student debt from all sources, by province of study and level of study," Statistics Canada, March 22, 2024, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=3710003601&pickMembers%5B0%5D=1.9&pickMembers%5B1%5D=3.1&cubeTimeFrame.startYear=2000&cubeTimeFrame.endYear=2020&referencePeriods=20000101%2C20200101>.
  5. Simon Enoch, "Saskatchewan Has the Second-Lowest Minimum Wage in Canada," Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, September 11, 2025, <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/news-research/saskatchewan-has-the-second-lowest-minimum-wage-in-canada/#:~:text=However%2C%20some%20say%20that%20Saskatchewan%27s%20minimum%20wage, costs%20of%20living%20in%20Saskatchewan%27s%20major%20cities>; Carol Baldwin, "Saskatchewan's Minimum Wage Still Not a Living Wage," MBC News, October 3, 2025, <https://www.mbcradio.com/2025/10/saskatchewans-minimum-wage-still-not-a-living-wage>.
  6. "Economy - 2025-26 Budget," Government of Saskatchewan, <https://budget.saskatchewan.ca/economy>.

## Recommendation Three

### ***Expand access to Open Educational Resources (OERs).***

The rising cost of post-secondary education in Saskatchewan presents a significant barrier to student access, success, and retention. Tuition fees, ancillary charges, and the escalating cost of textbooks and course materials impose a considerable financial burden on students. Expanding the use of Open Educational Resources (OERs) across the province is an effective mechanism to alleviate these pressures while enhancing pedagogical innovation and academic accessibility. OERs are freely accessible, openly licensed educational materials that can be adapted, remixed, and redistributed, allowing instructors to tailor content to specific course needs, local contexts, and student populations.

Saskatchewan has taken initial steps toward OER adoption, including provincial investments in the creation and dissemination of open educational materials. The province's official OER repository, SaskOER, consolidates free textbooks and academic resources developed by faculty at the University of Saskatchewan, the University of Regina, and Saskatchewan Polytechnic.<sup>1</sup> These resources have already provided demonstrable financial benefits to students, with more than 125,000 learners estimated to have saved approximately \$18 million by adopting zero-cost or low-cost course materials. However, despite these promising developments, the integration of OERs into Saskatchewan's post-secondary system remains inconsistent and uneven, limiting the full potential of this transformative approach to enhance affordability, equity, and pedagogical flexibility.<sup>2</sup>

To achieve a province-wide impact, a comprehensive strategy is required. This strategy should include sustainable funding mechanisms to support the creation, adaptation, and implementation of OERs across all institutions. Dedicated grant programs should incentivize faculty to convert high-enrollment courses to zero-cost textbook options while ensuring that digital infrastructure, including platforms such as Pressbooks, is widely available. Institutional reporting on student cost savings, course adoption rates, and pedagogical

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1. "Saskatchewan Open Education Resources," Government of Saskatchewan, <https://saskoer.ca/>.

2. "Saskatchewan Launches New Open Education Resources Website," Government of Saskatchewan, May 7, 2025, <https://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/news-and-media/2025/may/07/saskatchewan-launches-new-open-education-resources-website>.

outcomes should be standardized to facilitate data-driven assessment of the program's effectiveness. Furthermore, OER adoption is a tool to promote equity and inclusivity, particularly in rural, northern, and Indigenous communities where access to affordable learning materials is limited.

Integration of OERs should be accompanied by support for instructors in adopting open pedagogy practices, including adapting materials for Indigenous perspectives, localising them to the Saskatchewan context, and engaging students as co-creators of knowledge. In addition, meaningful collaboration with student associations, librarians, and instructional designers is essential for identifying courses where OER implementation would have the greatest impact.

By expanding access to OERs, the Ministry of Advanced Education will not only reduce financial barriers to education but also enhance the quality, inclusivity, and adaptability of Saskatchewan's post-secondary curriculum, ensuring that students have the resources necessary to succeed academically while promoting a culture of innovation and openness across the province's institutions.

## Recommendation Four

### ***Advocate against the international student cap imposed by Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC).***

The federal government's international student cap imposes significant restrictions on the issuance of study permits, potentially undermining provincial economic growth, post-secondary sustainability, and Canada's reputation as a global leader in post-secondary education. Provinces must advocate for a balanced approach that safeguards housing and public services without jeopardizing the benefits that international students bring to local economies and communities.

International students contribute enormously to the academic, cultural, and social vitality of the University of Saskatchewan and the province as a whole. Saskatchewan needs international students to promote further innovation, diversity, and economic resilience, values that an international student cap directly conflicts with.

Post-secondary institutions rely heavily on international student tuition. Reduced enrolment threatens financial stability and will lead to further tuition hikes for both international and domestic students. Smaller provinces like Saskatchewan depend on international students to help sustain local economies and address labour shortages. The cap disproportionately harms these regions. At the start of the 2025-26 academic year, the University of Saskatchewan had already lost over 500 international students, an 18% reduction. Retention of international students from first to second year remains the lowest of all demographics at 54.1%, far below the overall average.<sup>1</sup> Post-secondary institutions cannot rely solely on international students to bankroll them, and it is important to attract international talent. The actions of the IIRC, which claims to seek the best of the best, directly contradict this by harshly capping the number of international students who can study in Canada.<sup>2</sup> Saskatchewan has a real opportunity to stand up to the federal government's hasty actions, which harm our nation's global standing. Provinces must lead in calling for a nuanced, evidence-based approach that balances sustainability with growth.

## Recommendation Five

### ***Increase support for mental health and addictions, with a particular focus on students attending northern and regional colleges.***

Post-secondary students in Saskatchewan experience significant mental health and addiction challenges, a reality consistently documented in provincial and national surveys.<sup>1</sup> According to the Canadian Campus Well-Being Survey, nearly one-third of Saskatchewan post-secondary students report severe mental distress, with an additional quarter reporting low levels of mental well-being. Nationally, approximately three-quarters of post-secondary students indicate they have experienced mental health challenges during their academic studies. These challenges compound in northern and regional college settings, where geographic isolation, limited access to services, and specific cultural considerations, including the unique needs of Indigenous and Métis students, pose additional barriers to care.

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1. "Fall Term Census," University of Saskatchewan, October 8, 2025, <https://leadership.usask.ca/documents/about/reporting/fall-census-snapshot-2025.pdf>.
  2. Jessica Wong, "International Student Visas for Canada Plummet," CBC News, September 4, 2025, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/intl-student-permits-drop-1.7624350>.

While initiatives such as Healthy Campus Saskatchewan provide a framework for shared resources, training, and service coordination, the funding and infrastructure currently available are insufficient to meet the scale of student need.<sup>2</sup> Students in northern and regional colleges, including Northlands College and North West College, have limited access to on-campus counselling, addiction treatment, and culturally responsive mental health services. In recognition of these disparities, the Ministry needs to implement targeted measures to expand mental health and addiction support, ensuring equity across all campuses and regions.

Enhancing support must involve strategic investment in human resources, including the hiring of counsellors, addiction specialists, Indigenous wellness workers, and student navigators. The government must deploy tele-mental health platforms and mobile outreach programs to address geographic barriers and ensure that students can access timely and confidential care regardless of their location. Additionally, the integration of prevention and early-intervention programs, such as Mental Health First Aid and substance-use education, should be prioritized. These programs must be culturally competent and trauma-informed, particularly for Indigenous students who face historical and systemic barriers to accessing mental health care.

Partnerships with local health authorities and Indigenous-led wellness programs are critical to providing continuity of care and addressing complex mental health and addiction needs. By focusing resources on northern and regional campuses, the Ministry can improve equitable access to mental health services, enhance student retention, and support the overall well-being and academic success of Saskatchewan post-secondary students.

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1. Nolan K. Hop Wo, et al., "The Prevalence of Distress, Depression, Anxiety, and Substance Use Issues among Indigenous Post-Secondary Students in Canada," *Transcultural Psychiatry* 57, no. 2 (2019): 263–74. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1363461519861824>
  2. "Healthy Campus Saskatchewan," Government of Saskatchewan, <https://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/education-and-child-care-facility-administration/services-for-post-secondary-educational-institutions/healthy-campus-saskatchewan>.

## Recommendation Six

### ***Promote and support reviews of sexual violence prevention policies at post-secondary institutions every three years.***

Sexual and gender-based violence remains a pervasive issue on Canadian campuses, disproportionately affecting women and femme-presenting people, 2SLGBTQIA+ students, and marginalized communities. While many provinces mandate post-secondary institutions to create and regularly update sexual and gender-based violence prevention policies, this is not the case in Saskatchewan.<sup>1</sup>

Saskatchewan has one of the highest rates of sexual assault in Canada, with 104 sexual assaults reported per 100,000 people.<sup>2</sup> According to an article published by Peer Health, a group created by the University of Saskatchewan's Student Wellness Centre, over 13% of USask students reported that they were sexually touched without consent. Based on enrollment in 2019, that would mean 3,341 students were sexually touched without consent, who felt comfortable reporting the incident.<sup>3</sup> A 2019 Statistics Canada report stated that 71% of students at Canadian postsecondary institutions either witnessed or experienced unwanted sexualized behaviours at their institutions.<sup>4</sup> That is 18,249 students who either experienced or witnessed sexual violence.

Several Canadian provinces, including Ontario, British Columbia, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, Quebec, and Prince Edward Island, have provincial legislation that mandates that universities review, update, and maintain their campus sexual and gender-based violence policies.<sup>5</sup> The University of Saskatchewan's last sexual violence policy and procedures update was in 2015.<sup>6</sup> The USSU is advocating that the University of Saskatchewan urgently update the policy to ensure more proactive procedures and practices. The USSU calls upon the

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1. Caitlin Salvino, "The Next Generation of Campus Sexual Violence Legislation: Minimum Standards," Respect, Educate, Empower Survivors (REES), [https://www.reescommunity.com/the-next-generation-of-campus-sexual-violence-legislation-creating-minimum-standards-for-campus-policies-2/#::-:text=This%20began%20with%20Ontario%20passing,Prince%20Edward%20Island%20\(2018\)](https://www.reescommunity.com/the-next-generation-of-campus-sexual-violence-legislation-creating-minimum-standards-for-campus-policies-2/#::-:text=This%20began%20with%20Ontario%20passing,Prince%20Edward%20Island%20(2018);); Tricia Kindlerman, "Report Calls for Province to Develop Sexual Violence Policy for Universities," CBC News, February 10, 2020, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/u-of-a-sexual-violence-report-1.5457775>.
  2. Kathryn Keighley, "Police-Reported Crime Statistics in Canada, 2016," Statistics Canada, July 24, 2017, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2017001/article/54842-eng.htm>.
  3. "React to Sexual Assault," University of Saskatchewan Student Wellness Centre, <https://students.usask.ca/articles/react-to-sexual-assault.php>.

government to pursue a Memorandum of Understanding with the university that, every three to five years, as is the norm amongst Canadian universities, the University of Saskatchewan must undergo a review of its policies and consult with key stakeholders, such as students. This initiative would ensure ongoing accountability and evolving engagement with sexual and gender-based violence prevention on campus.

Sexual and gender-based violence prevention is not static. Cultural norms, technology, and student demographics evolve each year. The USSU strongly believes that sexual and gender-based violence begins with the culture we create, which includes provincial, organizational, and local culture. Emphasizing regular updates to policies and procedures is a stepping stone to reducing sexual and gender-based violence in Saskatchewan.

## Recommendation Seven

### ***Increase the availability of scholarships, grants, and bursaries for Indigenous and international students.***

Equitable access to post-secondary education requires financial supports that reflect the diverse backgrounds and needs of students, including Indigenous and international learners. While scholarship and bursary programs exist in Saskatchewan, the current scale, targeting, and accessibility do not adequately meet the needs of these populations.

Indigenous students benefit from programs such as the Saskatchewan Lieutenant Governor Indigenous Scholarship and awards administered through the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies; however, these programs are limited in scope and often prioritize graduate-level study, leaving gaps at the undergraduate and diploma levels. International students face

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4. Marta Burczycka, "Students' Experiences of Unwanted Sexualized Behaviours and Sexual Assault at Postsecondary Schools in the Canadian Provinces, 2019," Statistics Canada, September 14, 2020, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2020001/article/00005-eng.htm>.
  5. Salvino, "The Next Generation."
  6. "Sexual Assault Prevention Policy," University of Saskatchewan, <https://policies.usask.ca/policies/health-safety-and-environment/sexual-assault-prevention.php>.

similar challenges, including high tuition differentials and limited access to dedicated financial support, which can inhibit both recruitment and retention of international talent.<sup>1</sup>

To address these challenges, the Ministry should increase both the size and number of scholarships, grants, and bursaries available to Indigenous and international students. Funding mechanisms should support multi-year awards that foster retention and program completion, while eligibility criteria should be simplified and centralized to reduce administrative barriers and increase accessibility. Scholarships and bursaries must be flexible, allowing students to apply funds toward tuition, living expenses, travel, or culturally specific supports, thereby acknowledging the diverse financial pressures these populations face.

Additionally, awards should be structured to incentivize academic persistence and engagement with experiential learning opportunities, such as research, co-op placements, or community-based projects. Institutions should also implement robust data collection and reporting systems to monitor award uptake, completion rates, and demographic gaps, ensuring that resources are targeted at students with the greatest need. Targeted communication and outreach strategies are critical to raising awareness among Indigenous and international students about available opportunities and to providing application support, including mentoring and pre-application advising. By expanding and optimizing financial supports for Indigenous and international students, the Ministry will promote equitable access to post-secondary education, increase student retention and success, and strengthen the province's capacity to attract and retain diverse talent. These measures will contribute to a more inclusive and prosperous post-secondary system, reflecting Saskatchewan's commitment to accessibility, equity, and the development of human capital essential for the province's social and economic growth.

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1. "Saskatchewan Lieutenant Governor Indigenous Scholarship," Government of Saskatchewan, <https://www.saskatchewan.ca/residents/education-and-learning/scholarships-bursaries-grants/scholarships-and-bursaries/scholarships-and-bursaries-for-post-secondary-education/saskatchewan-lieutenant-governor-indigenous-scholarship>.

## Recommendation Eight

***Repeal Bill 137, The Education (Parents’ Bill of Rights) Amendment Act, 2023. Support wrap-around services for transgender youth and gender-creative kids, and ensure that third-party sexual health educators can provide resources to classrooms.***

The University of Saskatchewan Students’ Union (USSU) urges the Government of Saskatchewan to repeal *Bill 137* immediately. Although this legislation specifically harms Two-Spirit, transgender, non-binary, and gender diverse youth by enforcing restrictive gender norms, through banning third-party resources essential for teaching sexual health, consent, and bodily autonomy, this policy negatively impacts all students. It also impacts students at the post-secondary level, as education students are directly seeing the effects of this policy in the classrooms they are entering. Furthermore, children under the age of 16 inevitably grow up and are encouraged to pursue advanced education.

Being gatekept from sexual health and gender-inclusive education as a young person impacts the future of the broader fabric of our university community. Saskatchewan already faces the second-highest rate of sexual violence in Canada and rising HIV/STI rates, making access to comprehensive education critical.<sup>1</sup> *Bill 137* fundamentally jeopardizes student safety, mental health, and educators’ ability to foster acceptance and belonging, while ignoring overwhelming opposition from parents, teachers, health professionals, and community members in the province of Saskatchewan.<sup>2</sup>

It is a direct attack on trans youth as well as the autonomy of educators to support children’s learning in the classroom. Education should combat hatred and misinformation, not politicize identity or silence youth. We call on the government to uphold students’ rights to safety, identity, and autonomy, and to ensure schools remain spaces of learning, inclusion, and respect.

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1. Sexually Transmitted Infections (Government of Saskatchewan, 2019), <https://www.ehealthsask.ca/services/Manuals/Documents/Section-5-Dec-2019.pdf>. See Section: 5-20 - Chlamydia, 2, and Section: 5-30 – Gonococcal Infections, 3.

2. Gwen Rose, et al., “Repeal Bill 137: Saskatchewan Speaks Up for Trans Youth, Collective Resistance to Saskatchewan’s Bill 137: The Parents’ Bill of Rights” (University of Saskatchewan Social Innovation Lab on Gender and Sexuality, 2025). <https://law.usask.ca/socialinnovationlab/documents/repealbill137june2025.pdf>.

## Recommendation Nine

### ***Promote and support reviews of student wage policies at post-secondary institutions.***

Undergraduate student employees at USask currently earn a minimum of \$15.35 per hour, aligning with Saskatchewan’s minimum wage.<sup>1</sup>

However, this is still among the lowest in Canada. Furthermore, minimum wage does not reflect the true cost of living; in Saskatoon, the living wage is estimated at \$18.50, leaving many students struggling to meet basic needs. Comparisons with U15 universities and federal guidelines that recommend \$18.84 for undergraduate roles highlight the gap between USask wages and national standards. With over 680 students employed annually, fair compensation is critical for fostering engagement, retention, and academic success.<sup>2</sup>

We call upon the Government to promote and recommend raising the base student wage, and encourage the University of Saskatchewan to introduce more transparent tiered pay based on experience and responsibility, and ensure awareness and accountability through published wage grids and annual reviews tied to inflation. Paying students a living wage is essential to support their contributions as researchers, innovators, and leaders while maintaining USask’s competitiveness within Canada’s research-intensive institutions.

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1. “Current and Forthcoming General Minimum Wage Rates in Canada,” Government of Canada, <https://minwage-salairemin.service.canada.ca/en/general.html>.
  2. “Salary Ranges,” University of Saskatchewan, <https://careers.usask.ca/agreements/compensation/salary-ranges.php>.

## Recommendation Ten

### ***Increase funding for and visibility of student housing in urban and rural environments, especially for students facing systemic barriers to pursuing higher education.***

Affordable, accessible student housing is a cornerstone of educational success. Across Saskatchewan, housing shortages and rising costs disproportionately impact students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, Indigenous communities, racialized minorities, and persons with disabilities. Provincial governments must prioritize increased funding and visibility for student housing initiatives in both urban centres and rural regions to ensure equitable access to higher education and reduce systemic barriers.

Saskatoon housing shortages force our main campus students into precarious housing situations or move them to commute long distances. Smaller-scale campus locations struggle with limited rental markets and infrastructure, leaving students with few options. Lack of availability is a significant issue for our Prince Albert campus students, with many having to drive long distances to attend classes. The visibility of available programs and supports is low, leaving vulnerable students unaware of the resources available to them.

Housing insecurity directly affects academic performance, mental health, and retention rates. Investment in student housing stimulates local economies, particularly in rural areas, and supports workforce development. Purpose-built student housing also alleviates pressure on local rental markets and contributes to broader housing strategies.<sup>1</sup>

Student housing is not a luxury; it is a prerequisite for education success and social mobility. Increasing funding and visibility for housing initiatives allows Saskatchewan to break down systemic barriers and create pathways to success for all students, stimulating the provincial economy, innovation, and growth.

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1. Emmanuella Fredua-Agyeman, “No Place to Learn: Examining the Housing Crisis and Its Impact on Post-Secondary Students” (Southern Alberta Institute of Technology Students’ Association (SAITSA), 2025), <https://saitsa.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/Housing-Report-2025-WEB.pdf>, 1-11; Christina Park, “Majority of Students Facing Financial Hardship Due to Housing Costs, Report Finds,” *The Ubysey* (September 5, 2025), September 5, 2025, <https://ubyssey.ca/news/ams-academic-experience-survey-2025/>; “Housing Insecurity,” Centre for Innovation in Campus Mental Health, <https://campusmentalhealth.ca/toolkits/international-students/housing-insecurity/>.

## Conclusion

Investing in Saskatchewan's post-secondary students represents an investment in the province's long-term economic strength, social well-being, and prosperity. Through the Ministry of Advanced Education, the Government of Saskatchewan has one of the strongest working relationships with the post-secondary sector in Canada. However, many students continue to encounter significant barriers that threaten their ability to fully participate in and benefit from higher education. Meeting these challenges presents an opportunity for the government to build on its existing successes by mobilizing resources and sustaining its fiduciary and social responsibilities.

The recommendations outlined here reflect some of the most pressing priorities facing students today. By acting on them, Saskatchewan can strengthen its post-secondary system, support student success, and reinforce its reputation as a leader—one that values education as a basis of innovation, equity, and long-term growth.



