

As students return to campuses across Canada, the future of quality post-secondary education is uncertain. The global pandemic continues to be disruptive to students, faculty members and staff at all levels of education.

Educators had to quickly pivot last year to deliver their courses remotely, while others worried about student housing and workplace safety.

A lack of stable core funding, insufficient research funding and students struggling to make ends meet have led to a situation where the post-secondary education sector is strained.

This was on full display during the pandemic, with injections of short-term funding to meet urgent research needs.

Universities should have the resources they need to support research, their employees, and students alike.

We need continued investment from the federal government to ensure Canada maintains a high-quality, affordable, and accessible post-secondary education system.

Canada needs a government that will reduce precarious employment, increase research funding, and invest in education for all.

Stable funding to reduce precarity

More than half of faculty hiring since 2006 was contract-based, driving precarity up and wages down.

You'll be shocked to know that 2008 was the last time the federal government increased core post-secondary education funding, and this came with no requirement from the provinces to improve education.

Stable core funding for universities is essential to reduce precarious work and increase the quality of education.

The Education for All coalition recently called for a minimum federal transfer to the provinces of \$3 billion, ensuring that funding is transparent, accountable and keeps up with inflation and enrolment growth.

Pandemic highlights need for research funding

The pandemic highlights the vital importance of robust public funding for post-secondary research. A lack of public research funding has direct impacts on Canada's ability to respond to public health emergencies.

A panel convened to review federal support for research issued a report in 2017, calling for "major" reinvestments in research funding.

The Naylor report, as it came to be known, appealed for a nearly 10 per cent increase over four years, which would still only amount to 0.4 per cent increase in the federal budget. This target needs to be met.

Education for all

Access to education is out of reach for many students, particularly low-income students, those living with disabilities, and students from Indigenous, Black, Asian, and other racialized communities.

Funding should be increased for Indigenous post-secondary education by a minimum of \$650 million annually.

Interest on federal student loan debt must be eliminated.

O'Toole gets a failing grade on the education sector

Post-secondary education is not a priority for Erin O'Toole's Conservatives. There is no mention of tuition in their platform.

The NDP address issues of post-secondary affordability, accessibility and increased support for research, and their promise to eliminate interest on student loans also meets a demand made by the Education for All coalition, of which PSAC is a founding member.

The Bloc makes no mention of post-secondary education in their platform.

The Liberal platform, while making some significant commitments to research funding, interest free student loans and mental health care for students, still does not provide

sustainable, predictable core funding for post-secondary education in a way that will allow universities to move beyond precarious work models for workers, and that will allow students access to the education that they need, without incurring significant debt.

All parties need to make a stronger commitment to sustainable core funding, which will allow universities to provide decent jobs instead of precarious work.

Now is the time for the government to boost direct federal funding for post-secondary education and to reduce student debt.

PSAC will continue to support its 37,000 members who work in the post-secondary education sector.

