

August 8, 2019

Budget 2020 Consultations:  
Analysis of Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services Report

The Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services delivered a report to the legislative assembly on August 7, 2019 following their provincial Budget 2020 Consultation. The full report is 122 pages long and organized into sections addressing each public sector.<sup>1</sup> An excerpt of this report is enclosed which focuses on the Advanced Education recommendations. The original CUFA BC written submission is also enclosed.

### Background

Each year, the Select Standing Committee opens itself to the public as part of a consultation process to inform the upcoming provincial budget. This committee comprises members of the legislative assembly from across the political spectrum and is itself non-partisan.

This consultation process normally takes place in late fall but this year consultations took place in June. CUFA BC made a presentation to the committee on June 18 in Prince George followed by written submission on June 30. President Jacqueline Holler and Executive Director Annabree Fairweather represented CUFA BC.

### Reporting CUFA BC

CUFA BC made four recommendations to the committee for consideration in the 2020 Budget:

1. Redress the chronic underfunding of postsecondary institutions in BC, including the concomitant issues of precarious employment.
2. Provide greater institutional autonomy to universities by excluding research universities from the controls of the Public Sector Employers' Council (PSEC).
3. Follow through on the fifty-million-dollar government commitment on the graduate scholarship program and expansion to include non-STEM disciplines.
4. Redesign the Knowledge Development Fund program to a system of arm's-length peer-reviewed grants for research that addresses the most pressing social, economic, cultural, and environmental challenges.

The report incorporated suggestions from many organizations, including student groups, universities, and interest and lobby groups. Considering we were among several hundred participants who participated in the consultation process, the report incorporated some of our recommendations and acknowledged us by name in the Advanced Education section.

The report does not capture all of CUFA's suggestions but the committee had a few clear take-aways from us: One, the problematic role of PSEC in our sector's collective bargaining; two, the chronic underfunding of post-secondary; and three, a request to establish a provincial strategy for targeted investments in research and innovation. This last recommendation is an amalgamation of ideas put forth from a number of groups, including CUFA BC.

---

<sup>1</sup> The report can be found here <https://www.leg.bc.ca/parliamentary-business/committees/41stparliament-4thsession-fgs>

## Anticipating Government Priorities

The report focused on recurring themes that telegraph some of the government's bigger advanced education priorities for budgetary consideration. Specifically, the committee mentioned several times the issues of international student fees and contract faculty, suggesting these are high priorities. These themes appeared multiple times throughout the document, followed by student supports, capital infrastructure, research, and literacy.

The committee reported on priorities identified through the public survey and included aggregate data in their report. There was low response from the public with 440 participants but nonetheless the committee generally accepted the following prioritizations from the public.

The survey opened with the question 'what are your top three priorities to help make life better for you, your family and your community?' Public responses ranked Education sixth behind environment, health care, housing, social services, and transportation and transit. Education in this context does not distinguish between K-12 or post-secondary education.

Question four of the survey asked what the government could do to build a diverse and sustainable economy and the third-highest response was to increase opportunities for training and post-secondary education.

Education is not a burning issue for British Columbians but neither is it insignificant.

## Looking to Others

The report highlighted a number of diverse opinions from interest groups across the advanced education sector. It is worth considering the suggestions of others with the caveat that, just like in CUFA BC's experience, not all suggestions of any one group were represented by the committee and suggestions may have been emphasized or modified to suit the committee's particular interests.

According to the report, the Research Universities' Council of BC (RUC-BC) advocated for graduate student funding and student mental health supports, an interesting angle for research-focused university administrations. UBC was interested in Indigenous student supports. SFU was interested in student housing and capital investments.

Student groups also advocated for these issues but it is not surprising that they would since they represent student interests exclusively. It was surprising, however, that everyone focused so heavily on student issues. There are real student issues to address but there are many other issues going on with advanced education worth attending to as well. This heavy focus suggests, at least in part, that the most effective asks for government funding capitalize on student issues.

## What Worked for CUFA BC

There was value in presenting to the committee live and in person because it had the greatest influence in shaping the report. The committee lists everyone who made a presentation, written submission, or answered the survey but it was only groups who presented to the committee whose suggestions were recognized in the written report. Granting audience to the committee allowed for questions and answers, an opportunity for dialogue that would have been missed if we relied exclusively on the written submission. Making the presentation before the written

submission was beneficial, too, in that CUFA BC could tailor its recommendations in response to the committee's focus.

It was effective to book the opening session on a day early on in the consultation process. The committee was generous with questions and answers and hadn't yet reached saturation point for information overload.

### Summary

The report touches on high level recommendations and avoids getting into the weeds of any particular topic. Furthermore, the report fairly represents multiple and sometimes competing interests from many sources without giving a platform to any one stakeholder. The report is thorough enough to have influence in the 2020 budget preparations and represents a number of diverse opinions from all across the sector.

CUFA BC is pleased with the representation of its recommendations being made to government and will use this report to represent its members in future meetings with the Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills & Training.



August 7, 2019

To the Honourable  
Legislative Assembly of the  
Province of British Columbia

Honourable Members:

I have the honour to present herewith the Second Report of the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services for the Fourth Session of the 41st Parliament.

The Report covers the work of the Committee in regard to the Budget 2020 Consultation, and was unanimously approved by the Committee.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Committee,

Bob D'Eith, MLA  
Chair

# Composition of the Committee

## Members

Bob D'Eith, MLA	Chair	Maple Ridge-Mission
Dan Ashton, MLA	Deputy Chair	Penticton
Doug Clovechok (from March 6, 2019)		Columbia River-Revelstoke
Rich Coleman, MLA (from March 6, 2019)		Langley East
Mitzi Dean, MLA		Esquimalt-Metchosin
Ronna-Rae Leonard, MLA		Courtenay-Comox
Peter Milobar, MLA (to March 6, 2019)		Kamloops-North Thompson
Tracy Redies, MLA (to March 6, 2019)		Surrey-White Rock
Nicholas Simons, MLA		Powell River-Sunshine Coast

## Committee Staff

Susan Sourial, Clerk Assistant, Committees and Interparliamentary Relations

Karan Riarh, Committee Research Analyst

Katey Stickle and Josée Couture, Committee Researchers

Louise Brittain Boisvert, Library Systems Analyst

Jennifer Arril, Committee Clerk

# Executive Summary

Every year, the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services (the “Committee”) conducts a consultation on the upcoming provincial budget. This consultation presents a unique opportunity for British Columbians to directly engage with a parliamentary committee of Members of the Legislative Assembly on the issues that matter most to them. The Committee hears from individuals and organizations representing a range of sectors, interests and perspectives on how to address challenges confronting the province.

While the consultation typically takes place in the fall, this year, the Committee moved the consultation to the summer to enable Members to deliver their report to the Legislative Assembly earlier in the budget process. This change was made in consultation with the Minister of Finance who released the *Budget 2020 Consultation Paper* on June 3. British Columbians were invited to share their ideas and priorities for the next provincial budget throughout the month of June. By the closing deadline of June 28, the Committee had visited 15 communities across the province, heard 276 presentations, and received 496 written and video submissions and 452 responses to an online survey.

The Committee carefully considered all of the thoughtful input provided by British Columbians to make 106 recommendations for the next provincial budget. This report provides a thorough summary of the evidence, ideas and priorities put forward by British Columbians which informed these recommendations. The evidence, rationale and stories were highly informative and Committee Members encourage reviewing the recommendations within the context of this narrative. Please note that the numbering of recommendations does not represent priority; the report is organized thematically and the themes are presented in alphabetical order.

Support for youth formerly in care emerged as a key area for action for Committee Members. They note that the primary source of support when youth formerly in care transition into adulthood is the Agreements with Young Adults program. The program has a number of barriers to access and is insufficient to provide youth with the supports they need to succeed. Committee Members emphasize the unique challenges youth formerly in care face in transitioning to independence, and the need to incorporate youth voices and experiences to inform improvements, in encouraging changes to the program.

The Committee also identifies water sustainability as a critical concern, noting that challenges are exacerbated by climate change. A number of volunteer community-based organizations across the province do an enormous amount of work to protect watersheds and drinking water supply with limited resources. The Committee agrees on a need to better plan and build resilience into our water infrastructure with improved resourcing to these organizations, emphasizing the importance of partnerships with Indigenous communities and local governments.

Invasive species represent a significant threat to the province’s ecosystem and to the economy. Invasive species councils across the province have been drawing attention to gaps and insufficient resources for education, prevention, monitoring, response and enforcement for a number of years. The Committee once again stresses the urgency of addressing this issue.

Sufficient resources are also required for fish and wildlife conservation, management and data collection in order to better support evidence-based decisions. Other recommendations related to the environment include: supporting the CleanBC plan and continued shifts to clean and renewable energy, establishing comprehensive species-at-risk legislation, increasing funding to BC Parks and Recreation Sites and Trails BC, and creating a provincial approach to single-use plastics.

Over the last several years, communities across the province have been severely impacted by these wildfires and floods. Committee Members highlight a need for investments in prevention, adaptation, response and recovery from these disasters, as well as a need for earthquake awareness and preparedness. They note that many British Columbians and local communities are taking action to ensure they are doing their part to prevent, mitigate, prepare for and respond to disasters. Continued provincial investment, leadership and collaboration is needed to support these efforts.

With respect to advanced education, the Committee supports a review of the funding formula to address funding challenges and barriers and inequities with access to post-secondary education, pointing specifically to issues with ever-increasing international student tuition fees and the increasing use of contract faculty. They also highlight a critical need to invest in a range of programs to address current and projected labour market gaps, including ensuring that training opportunities are provided locally. Other areas of interest to Committee Members include: flexibility with accounting policies to enable post-secondary institutions to finance capital projects; improving the provision of on-campus mental health and other student supports; and making targeted investments in research and innovation. The Committee also recommends reviewing student financial grant models and increasing investments in literacy programs.

Natural resource development emerged as a key area of focus for economic development, with the Committee making a number of recommendations in relation to agriculture, fisheries, forestry, liquefied natural gas (LNG) and mining. Committee Members especially acknowledge the critical challenges facing the forestry sector and recommend measures to encourage innovation and adaptation as well as bridging and retraining of workers. Labour market gaps and challenges related to automation and technological advancements are also important issues, with the Committee looking to immigration and supports for all BC workers to adapt, transfer or upgrade their skills as potential solutions. The Committee further encourages investments to bolster tourism as well as continued efforts to strengthen trade relationships and reduce interprovincial trade barriers. Investments in broadband connectivity are also highlighted as key to economic and social development, including access to education and services.

On fiscal policy, Committee Members are of the view that a comprehensive review of the entire provincial taxation system should occur, noting a need to modernize the structure and ensure that policies and practices are fair, consistent and effective. They further emphasize the importance of continued fiscal prudence and investing in services, the economy, reconciliation and social equality. The Committee also makes recommendations related to prompt payment and provincial sales tax (PST) compliance by non-resident companies.

Health care remains a significant topic of interest to all British Columbians, with supports and services to those with chronic and complex diseases emerging as an area for increased attention and investment. The Committee also makes recommendations to increase investments in community care, including addressing staffing challenges, and in supports for palliative and end-of-life care. Additional areas for action include digital health technology, health human resources, pharmacare and mental health and addiction. Committee

Members also identify opportunities to improve public health and wellness and access to contraception, as well as emphasize a need to improve access to services in rural and remote communities.

The Committee recognizes that housing affordability continues to be a priority for British Columbians and focuses on opportunities to work with municipalities and other stakeholders to increase supply and approve new housing construction projects. Committee Members also encourage continued investments in homelessness prevention and solutions to homelessness, noting that youth at risk of or experiencing homelessness may require different supports and services. The need for flexibility in small, rural and remote communities with respect to limited dual agency rules for realtors was another area of interest. The Committee also recommends measures related to short-term rentals and standards for elevators.

While acknowledging that collective bargaining is currently underway, Committee Members recognize the importance of investing in K-12 education, reflecting on suggestions put forward by British Columbians with respect to student supports, programming and curriculum, and recruitment and retention. The Committee focuses their recommendations on two areas: sustaining capital investments in new construction, seismic upgrades and maintenance; and ensuring funding is adequate to meet the province's commitment with respect to reconciliation.

With respect to public safety and justice, a number of solutions are identified to improve justice practices and access to legal services, including increasing funding for legal aid and restorative justice practices, investing in child and youth advocacy centres, and expanding the notary scope of practice. The Committee also recommends addressing barriers and limitations to access to legal aid for those experiencing intimate-partner or gender-based violence, as well as increasing investments in programs and services, including sexual assault crisis response and integrated sexual assault clinics, for people affected by gender-based, intimate-partner, and sexual violence. Other recommendations address mental health supports for individuals incarcerated in the provincial correctional system, and programs and services that promote the safety and security of individuals engaged in sex work.

Committee Members encourage ongoing investments in child care to improve access and affordability, support increased funding for children and youth with special needs and early years mental health services and for Community Living BC, and recommend a review of tax benefit provisions for parents with a child in temporary care. Other areas of focus within social services include: earnings exemptions for income and disability assistance and poverty reduction; investments in the social services sector; and funding and staffing for the Employment Standards Branch and Labour Relations Board.

With respect to sport, arts and culture, Committee Members recommend increased, multi-year funding through the BC Arts Council, as well as funding for capital infrastructure and programs that support Indigenous communities in preserving and interpreting their heritage. They also recommend reviewing the purpose and methodology of the Community Gaming Grants program to ensure it meets the evolving needs of communities. Support for the creative industries through existing tax credits, funding for Creative BC, Amplify BC and the BC Film Commission are also highlighted. The Committee further recommends increased, predictable, multi-year funding for public libraries and the delivery of library services in rural and Indigenous communities, and funding for programs that support physical literacy.

Committee Members make several recommendations with respect to transportation and transit, including increasing and expanding HandyDART services to improve accessible transportation and investing in active transportation (cycling and walking) infrastructure, education and promotion. The Committee further

supports eliminating the PST on electric bicycles as a means to incent their purchase. Recommendations related to public transit focus on exploring new pricing mechanisms to make public transit more accessible for youth and low-income families, addressing gaps in regional transportation services, particularly in rural and remote areas, and prioritizing the development of electric buses.

# Advanced Education

Access and affordability were key themes in submissions and presentations about advanced education, and in responses to question one in the online survey (see Appendix A). Specific issues related to tuition fees for international students and pay scales for contract faculty were also raised throughout the consultation. The Committee further heard that there is a need for additional investments in capital infrastructure, student supports, research, and literacy. In question four of the survey, regarding what government can do to build a diverse and sustainable economy, increasing opportunities for training and post-secondary education was the third highest selected response.

## Adult Education and Literacy

The Committee heard about barriers to adult developmental and adult basic education programs, including cost and availability of programs. The Vancouver Community College Faculty Association stated that educators should be provided the ability to grant students more time to complete courses to better accommodate the complex lives of these learners, which may involve juggling multiple jobs or family responsibilities, as well as poverty, health and other challenges. The need to increase funding and eliminate fees for adult developmental programs was particularly emphasized.

Literacy Quesnel Society and the Smithers Community Services Association stressed the value of literacy outreach coordination and community adult literacy programs, pointing out that adults with limited literacy encounter barriers when they interact with the world and that low literacy leads to poorer health outcomes, fewer employment opportunities, limited social engagement, and low self-esteem. Decoda Literacy Solutions shared that the growing number of applicants for grants has led to less funding for existing programs and that funding has not kept pace with cost and need.

## Capital Funding

Several post-secondary institutions and student unions emphasized the need for affordable housing options for students. North Island College stated that students are unable to access post-secondary education and training because they are not able to find affordable, safe and secure housing in their region. Similarly, the Teaching Support Staff Union, Simon Fraser University noted that rising rents, high demand and low vacancy rates make it difficult for students to find adequate and affordable housing in urban centres across BC.

The Graduate Student Society at Simon Fraser University observed that the *Residential Tenancy Act* does not cover university residences; as such, there is no cap on allowable annual residence rental rate increases. They suggested creating protections for university residences, including standardized contracts, dispute resolution mechanisms, and reasonable maximum allowable annual rate increases on residence units that are not tied to ongoing rental agreements.

Committee Members also heard ideas for providing greater flexibility for post-secondary institutions to access retained earnings to finance student housing and other capital priorities. Okanagan College observed that the K-12 educator sector enjoys the ability to use retained earnings for capital infrastructure; however, the

post-secondary sector does not. The B.C. Association of Institutes + Universities shared that these accounting policy restrictions and inconsistencies hamper their ability to use existing financial resources to respond to demand.

A number of post-secondary institutions requested provincial funding to address capital priorities at their respective institutions. Many institutions, including Langara College, Selkirk College, Simon Fraser University and the University of British Columbia, highlighted challenges with aging infrastructure and a need to modernize campus facilities and IT infrastructure. Other institutions, such as the College of New Caledonia, pointed to constraints such as physical space limitations that inhibit their ability to expand programs.

## Collective Bargaining and Human Resources

Faculty associations across the province explained that non-regular faculty are paid on secondary salary scales at many post-secondary institutions in BC, often receiving significantly less pay than regular faculty while doing the same amount of work. The associations also noted that contract faculty often do not have access to benefits, retirement plans or professional development. They emphasized that this inequity hurts institutions and communities as the precarious nature of sessional work means an institution lacks a stable employment base, students have no continuity in looking for a mentor or advisor, and contract faculty are unable to put down roots in the local community. Others observed that academic staff in these precarious positions are disproportionately women and equity seeking groups. Highlighting an increase in reliance on contract faculty, some linked the issue to budgetary pressures due to underfunding of the sector. The associations suggested paying contract faculty using the existing mandated provincial salary scale on a prorated basis.

Both the Confederation of University Faculty Associations of British Columbia and the Association of Administrative and Professional Staff at UBC were of the view that research universities should be removed from the Public Sector Employers' Council (PSEC) mandate. The Association of Administrative and Professional Staff at UBC stated that bargaining under PSEC limits each university's ability to attract, compete for and retain global talent. They also noted that while the University of British Columbia receives operational funding from the province, additional resources, including grants and self-generating revenues, directly fund a number of positions, and as such, the University should not be subject to the same bargaining restrictions.

## Indigenous Students

Representatives from both the University of British Columbia and the University of British Columbia Okanagan advocated for further support for the Aboriginal Access Studies program. The University of British Columbia noted that in 2018, 56 students were registered in their Aboriginal Access Studies program; however, the program is currently funded for only 18 full-time equivalent students. They stated that supporting this and similar programs at post-secondary institutions across BC would enhance access and create new opportunities for Indigenous students from a variety of educational backgrounds.

Langara College and Okanagan College suggested broadening the Aboriginal Service Plan, which provides additional funding to post-secondary institutions to implement innovative new programs, activities and services for Indigenous learners, to all post-secondary institutions. Langara College, who currently does not receive Aboriginal Service Plan funding, shared that while one-time grants for specific initiatives for Indigenous students have been appreciated, ongoing funding is required to expand programs and services.

A number of other institutions, including Selkirk College, Northern Lights College, Thompson Rivers' University and Kwantlen Polytechnic University, highlighted their efforts to increase the participation of Indigenous learners. They requested additional resources to improve programs and services, particularly with respect to reconciliation initiatives, to support the unique needs of Indigenous learners.

## International Students

Many student unions expressed concerns about inequities for international students with respect to substantive and unpredictable increases in their tuition fees, with a view that fee increases should be capped. The Vancouver Island University Students' Union shared data from Statistics Canada which show international tuition fees have increased by 485 percent from 1991 to 2017. They added that international student tuition accounts for almost 50 percent of tuition revenues but international students only represent 19.5 percent of BC university enrollment. The organizations noted that as international student tuition is unregulated, post-secondary institutions rely on increasing these fees to address budgetary pressures.

Student unions emphasized the impact unregulated tuition fee increases have on international students and how they are unable to appropriately plan and pay for their education. The Douglas Students' Union observed that some international students are working in precarious jobs, paid under the table, as they hit work limits under student visa regulations. They also reported that the majority of students using emergency food banks are international students.

Several submissions and presentations also suggested creating an international education strategy that provides better funding to institutions and sufficient support for international students to assist in their cultural, social and economic integration.

## Mental Health and Student Supports

The Committee heard from several organizations regarding supports for students in areas of mental health, diversity, inclusion, safety and security. The Research Universities' Council of British Columbia noted that BC universities have a duty to meaningfully address the health challenges often faced by students, particularly those related to mental health. They added that many universities have recruited additional counsellors and investigators, introduced peer mentorship programs, and new integrated health teams to help students in distress; however, additional resources are needed. The Graduate Student Society at Simon Fraser University suggested having provincial and regional health authorities cover health services at post-secondary institutions as a means to address resource pressures.

## Operational Funding

Multiple institutions informed the Committee that funding challenges are leading to barriers and inequities in the system. The Okanagan College Students' Union noted that the proportion of public funding to BC colleges and universities has dropped to near 50 percent of total operating costs, down from more than 80 percent in the 1980s. They explained that insufficient funding has resulted in program cuts, waitlists, deteriorating equipment, and antiquated facilities. The Confederation of University Faculty Associations of British Columbia also shared concerns about underfunding of post-secondary institutions, highlighting that BC lags behind other provinces in this regard.

Some institutions were of the view that the funding formula for post-secondary institutions should be reviewed or adjusted. The Vancouver Island University Faculty Association observed that some institutions receive base funding to teach a subject while others receive nothing for delivering the same program. They noted that this inequity leaves their university with a shortfall, and suggested changing the funding model to ensure institutions receive equal base funding for the same work. Several institutions, including Langara College, Selkirk College, and Thompsons Rivers University, advocated for evaluations of and increases to their operating grants. Simon Fraser University and Kwantlen Polytechnic University requested investments to increase the number of full-time equivalent students at their institutions to meet demand south of the Fraser; this request was echoed by a number of business and community organizations.

### **Addressing Labour Gaps – Program Funding**

Throughout the consultation, British Columbians stressed challenges and opportunities with workforce training, recruitment and retention across a number of sectors, highlighting current and projected labour gaps. These sectors include: natural resources, health, science and technology, early childhood education, digital media and film, trades, and engineering. The discussions and issues presented to the Committee are acknowledged across many themes in this report.

Post-secondary institutions, community organizations, businesses, industry organizations and other groups often advocated for funding to expand or introduce new programs to address these gaps. An emphasis was placed on providing local training opportunities in northern, rural and remote communities where gaps are more acute, as well as funding for programs and initiatives that encourage underrepresented populations to explore non-traditional professions.

## **Research and Innovation**

The Committee received several requests for provincial investment in research and innovation, including continued support for Genome BC, to enable the province to remain competitive in national and global economies. The Research Universities' Council of British Columbia noted that BC is behind other provinces in support for research, as well as financial assistance offered to graduate students. TRIUMF, a particle accelerator centre in Vancouver, encouraged investments that leverage funding from other sources and in areas where BC is an innovation leader. Both B.C. Colleges and Okanagan College thought that an innovation fund should be established to encourage colleges to engage in more applied research.

## **Tuition and Financial Assistance**

A number of presentations and submissions discussed challenges with affordability and access to post-secondary education, and the increasing expenses and hardships faced by students. The UBC Students' Union Okanagan, Okanagan College Students' Union and the North Island Students' Union referred to a 2018 graduate survey that found one in two students graduated with debt, and nearly 65 percent of those students owed more than \$20,000.

Several students' unions suggested establishing an upfront, needs-based grants program to address these challenges. According to the British Columbia Federation of Students, upfront costs are key barriers to accessing education, with financial stress having a significant negative impact on student performance. The Thompson Rivers University Students' Union shared that studies show needs-based grants as the most impactful financial aid option with respect to participation and completion. The UBC Alma Mater Society observed that BC remains the only province in Canada that does not have a needs-based grants program to complement the federal Canada Student Grants program.

Some submissions advocated for reducing and freezing tuition fees. Linking increases in tuition fees and ancillary fees to an insufficient level of operating grants, the British Columbia Federation of Students referenced the comparative decrease in public funding of post-secondary institutions between the 1980s and the present, while Tuition Freeze Now noted that tuition makes up a larger proportion of revenues than government funding at some institutions. They acknowledged that reducing tuition fees to provide financial relief to students may require a corresponding increase in provincial grant funding to post-secondary institutions.

Another area of interest was making the B.C. Graduate Scholarship program permanent and expanding it to additional disciplines. Simon Fraser University and the Research Universities Council of British Columbia observed that BC is behind other provinces in graduate student numbers, especially in key disciplines such as engineering and computer sciences, and that increased, ongoing funding is needed to attract and retain graduate student talent. The University of British Columbia noted that attracting graduate students will help to build a skilled labour force and expand the capacity of BC's post-secondary research and innovation ecosystem. They also emphasized that scholarship programs enable students from marginalized, disadvantaged and historically underrepresented backgrounds to have access to graduate education.

## Conclusions

The Committee identified funding challenges as leading to barriers and inequities in the post-secondary system. They focused on the implications for international student fees, which are unregulated, and the employment and pay of contract faculty, two areas that institutions appear to be leveraging as a means to address budgetary pressures. They also discussed a need to improve pay for contract faculty and provide a pathway to full-time work. Committee Members were of the view that these issues require a broader system level examination and response, and recommended that the funding formula be reviewed.

The need to provide additional training opportunities across a number of fields to address current and projected labour market demands was a recurring theme. This includes increasing opportunities for work-integrated learning and encouraging underrepresented groups to participate in certain fields (e.g. women in trades and technology, and men in early childhood education). Committee Members emphasized the importance of training locally as a means to address specific challenges in rural and remote communities, as individuals tend to stay in the communities they train in. They also recognized the critical value of community literacy for developing skills to adapt to new economies.

The Committee acknowledged requests from student unions and post-secondary institutions on the need for affordable student housing as well as the need to address aging campus facilities. They reflected on recent changes that enable post-secondary institutions to borrow for student housing, and agreed that policies with respect to accessing retained earnings could be reviewed to provide post-secondary institutions with additional flexibility to finance capital projects.

Committee Members appreciated the ongoing work of the province's universities and colleges to advance reconciliation and support Indigenous learners. They agreed on the importance of ensuring equitable access to funding for all post-secondary institutions in the provision of supports and services for Indigenous students. The Committee also discussed opportunities for collaboration and partnerships with local communities and health authorities to build on and expand the provision of on-campus supports and services for all students while acknowledging recent investments in mental health and addictions care and the prevention of sexual assaults on campus.

With respect to research and innovation, the Committee agreed that additional efforts should be made to ensure BC maximizes federal funding leveraging opportunities. They also emphasized that investments in research need to be strategic and purposeful to address areas of provincial priority.

Returning to the theme of access and affordability, Committee Members found the arguments for shifting to a needs-based grant system compelling. They expressed interest in additional analysis that examines different grant and financial assistance structures to ensure students are well-supported.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Committee recommends to the Legislative Assembly that the provincial government:

### **Adult Education and Literacy**

1. Provide predictable, multi-year funding to literacy outreach coordination, community adult literacy, and similar programs to stabilize literacy work and allow for innovative, long-term approaches to addressing BC's literacy needs.

### **Capital Funding**

2. Examine providing greater flexibility in the ability to access retained earnings for student housing and other capital priorities.

### **Indigenous Students**

3. Review eligibility and practice for the Aboriginal Service Plan and ensure equity in access to this funding across all post-secondary institutions.

### **Mental Health and Student Supports**

4. Increase operating grants and collaborate with local communities and health authorities to expand supports for students in areas of mental health, diversity, inclusion, safety and security.

### **Operational Funding**

5. Review the funding formula for post-secondary institutions to address funding challenges, and barriers and inequities to access.

6. Ensure operational and program funding to post-secondary institutions positions the province to respond to immediate and projected gaps in the labour market, including ensuring local training opportunities and reducing barriers for underrepresented groups; sectors to address include: agriculture, forestry, science, technology, engineering, mathematics, trades, digital media and film, early childhood education, aerospace, physiotherapy, speech-language therapy, laboratory science, and occupational therapy.

### **Research and Innovation**

7. Establish a provincial strategy for targeted investments in research and innovation, including opportunities to leverage matching federal funding.

### **Tuition and Financial Assistance**

8. Review and evaluate grant models to ensure funding is responsive and provides the most impactful support for reducing barriers and inequities to access.

# Summary of Recommendations

## Advanced Education

### Adult Education and Literacy

1. Provide predictable, multi-year funding to literacy outreach coordination, community adult literacy, and similar programs to stabilize literacy work and allow for innovative, long-term approaches to addressing BC's literacy needs.

### Capital Funding

2. Examine providing greater flexibility in the ability to access retained earnings for student housing and other capital priorities.

### Indigenous Students

3. Review eligibility and practice for the Aboriginal Service Plan and ensure equity in access to this funding across all post-secondary institutions.

### Mental Health and Student Supports

4. Increase operating grants and collaborate with local communities and health authorities to expand supports for students in areas of mental health, diversity, inclusion, safety and security.

### Operational Funding

5. Review the funding formula for post-secondary institutions to address funding challenges, and barriers and inequities to access.
6. Ensure operational and program funding to post-secondary institutions positions the province to respond to immediate and projected gaps in the labour market, including ensuring local training opportunities and reducing barriers for underrepresented groups; sectors to address include: agriculture, forestry, science, technology, engineering, mathematics, trades, digital media and film, early childhood education, aerospace, physiotherapy, speech-language therapy, laboratory science, and occupational therapy.

### Research and Innovation

7. Establish a provincial strategy for targeted investments in research and innovation, including opportunities to leverage matching federal funding.

### Tuition and Financial Assistance

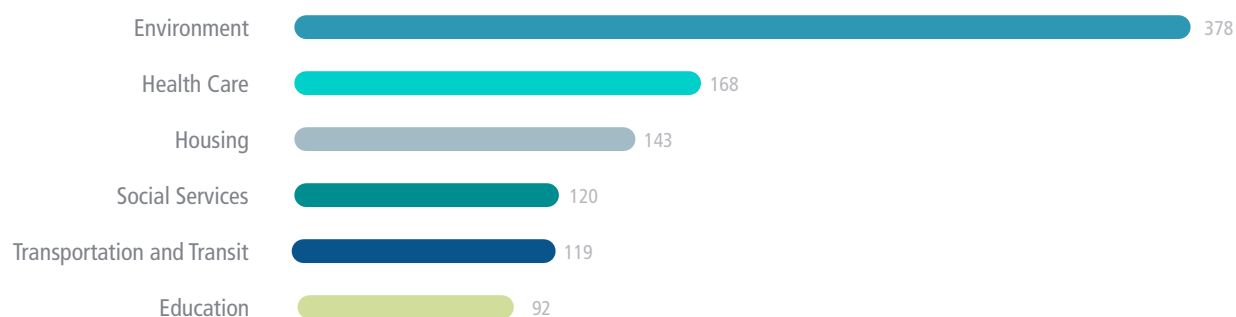
8. Review and evaluate grant models to ensure funding is responsive and provides the most impactful support for reducing barriers and inequities to access.

# Appendix A: Survey Results

## Question 1

### What are your top three priorities to help make life better for you, your family and your community? (440 responses)

The response option to this question was open-ended. All responses were reviewed and coded according to theme.



Environment was the most common theme in responses to this question. Within this theme, addressing climate change and protecting the environment, specifically old growth forests, were identified as the most significant priorities. Other priority areas included increasing funding for and access to outdoor recreational opportunities such as BC Parks, hiking and mountain bike trails, and local green spaces; and transitioning to a green economy by supporting renewable energy as well as environmental initiatives and incentives.

Health care was identified as the second priority by respondents with a focus on increasing and expanding mental health and addictions supports. Other respondents emphasized providing more funding and investing in health human resources to improve access and reduce wait times. Several respondents also recommended support for and awareness of myalgic encephalomyelitis.

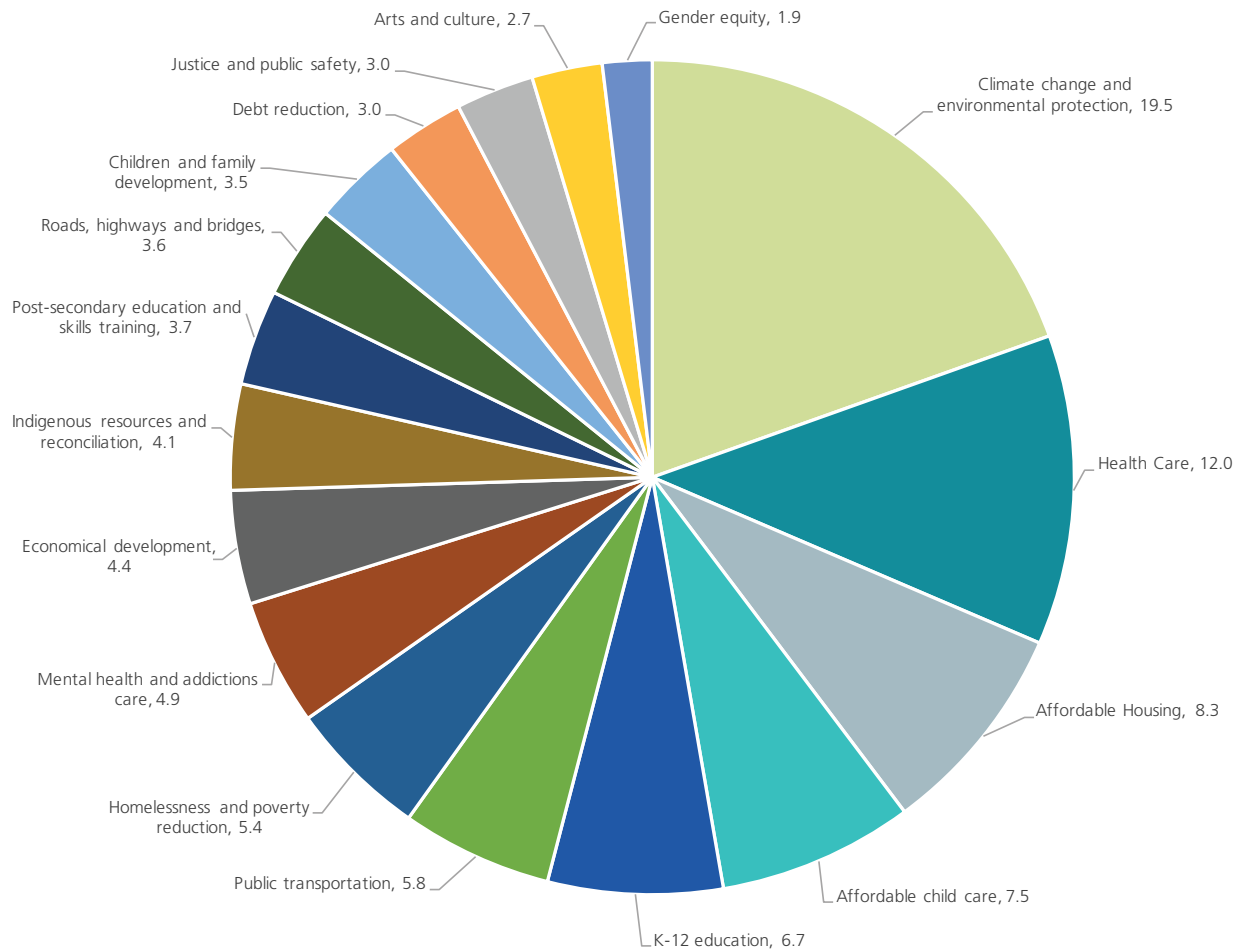
The third priority was housing with respondents specifically referencing a need for more affordable housing options for rental and home ownership, including more cooperative and low-income housing. Addressing homelessness was also identified as a priority within this theme.

Social services and transportation and transit closely followed housing as priority areas. Regarding social services, respondents focused on: increasing access to affordable, high-quality child care; implementing a poverty reduction plan; increasing support for persons with disabilities and raising income and disability assistance rates; and addressing the high cost of living by increasing wages. Within the transportation and transit category, respondents supported active transportation infrastructure such as bike lanes; and investing in public transit in both urban and rural areas. There were also several responses regarding increased funding for public education and ensuring accessible and affordable post-secondary education.

Other themes, including fiscal policy, public safety and justice, economic development, and sport, arts and culture, received less than 40 responses.

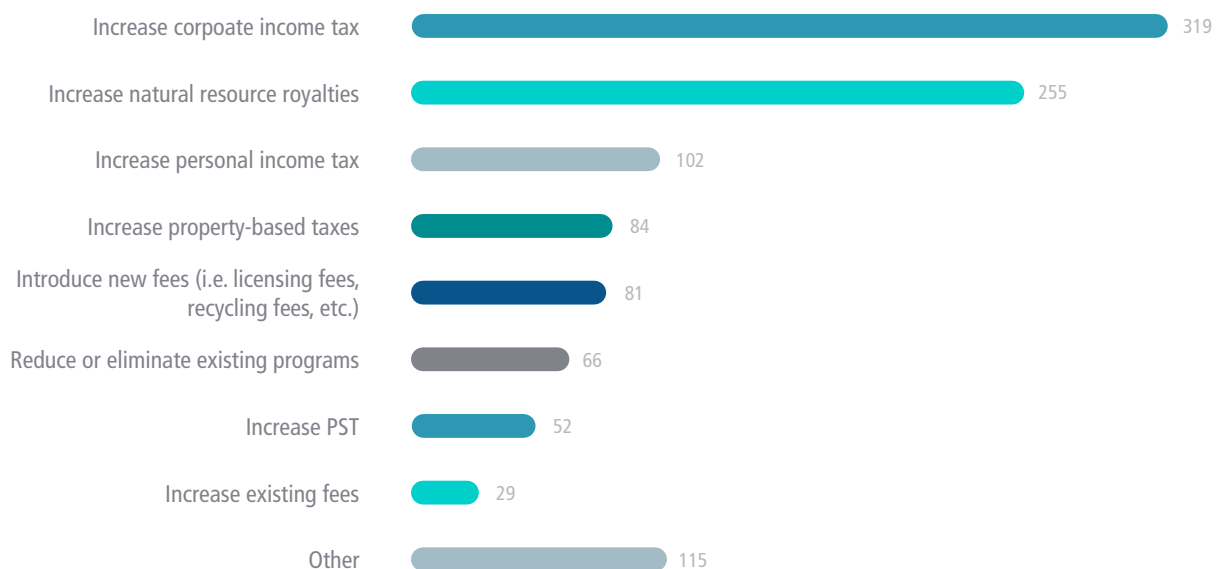
## Question 2

If you had one dollar to put toward programs and services across government, how would you choose to divide it? (432 responses)



### Question 3

Given the high level of demand for government programs and services, how would you pay for new and enhanced programs and services? (434 responses)

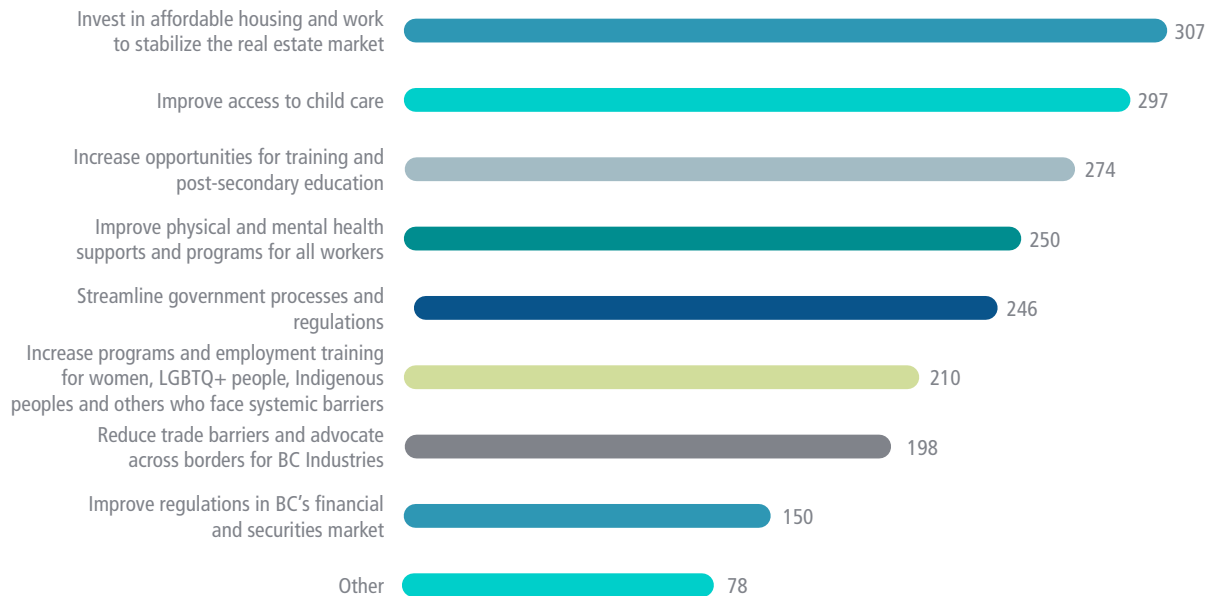


Increasing the corporate income tax and increasing natural resource royalties were the top two selected measures to pay for new and enhanced programs and services. This was followed by 'other', increasing the personal income tax, increasing property-based taxes and introducing new fees.

The 'other' category offered an opportunity for respondents to provide their own ideas for paying for new and enhanced programs and services. Many respondents suggested increasing the carbon tax and foreign-buyers tax followed closely by increasing taxation on high income earners and eliminating tax evasion; and creating a leaner, more efficient government to better manage the current budget. Other suggestions included cutting back on salaries, benefits and travel expenses in the public sector; and reducing corporate subsidies.

## Question 4

### What can government do to build a diverse and sustainable economy and support businesses and industries across BC? (433 responses)

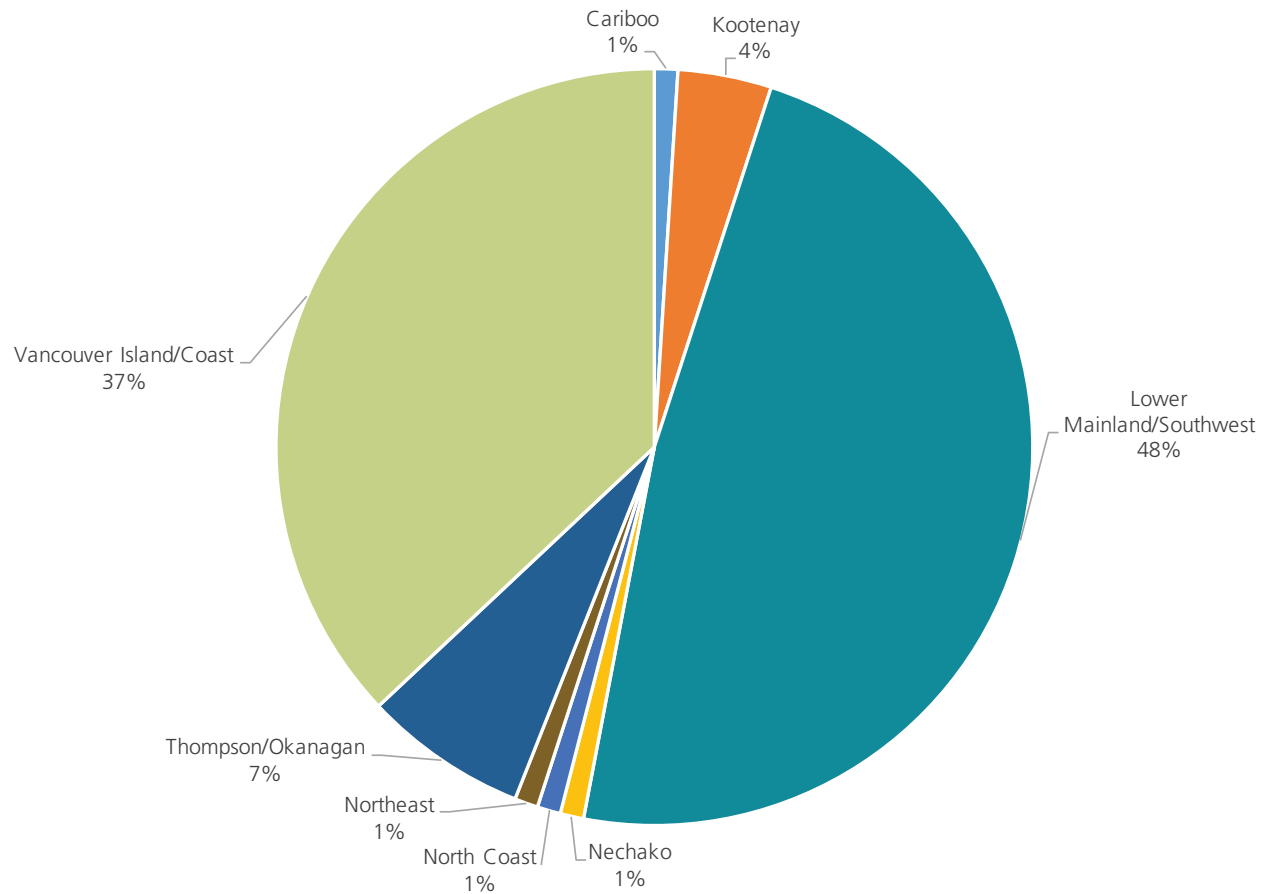


The top two selections for what government can do to build a diverse and sustainable economy and support businesses and industries were support the transition to a cleaner economy and reduce pollution, and invest in affordable housing and work to stabilize the real estate market. This was followed by increase opportunities for training and post-secondary education and improve access to child care. Less support was expressed for the remaining options.

In the “other” category, the most common suggestion was to invest in transportation, including public transit and active transportation. Other ideas included protecting the environment, specifically old growth forests, and investing in renewable energy and ecotourism, and increasing funding for health care and education.

## Question 5

Please identify your region. (433 responses)



**A Submission to the**  
**Pre-Budget Consultations of the**  
**Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services**  
**by**  
**the Confederation of University Faculty Associations of British Columbia**  
**June, 2019**

## **The Confederation of University Faculty Association of British Columbia**

The Confederation of University Faculty Associations of British Columbia (CUFA BC) represents over 5,500 professors, lecturers, instructors, librarians and other academic staff at the five research-intensive universities in British Columbia. These are: the University of British Columbia, Simon Fraser University, the University of Northern British Columbia, Royal Roads University and the University of Victoria. The Confederation has been in existence for over forty years and works closely with member Faculty Associations at each institution.

Our purposes are to support high-quality post-secondary education and research in British Columbia and to advocate for the interests of our members.

## Summary of Recommendations

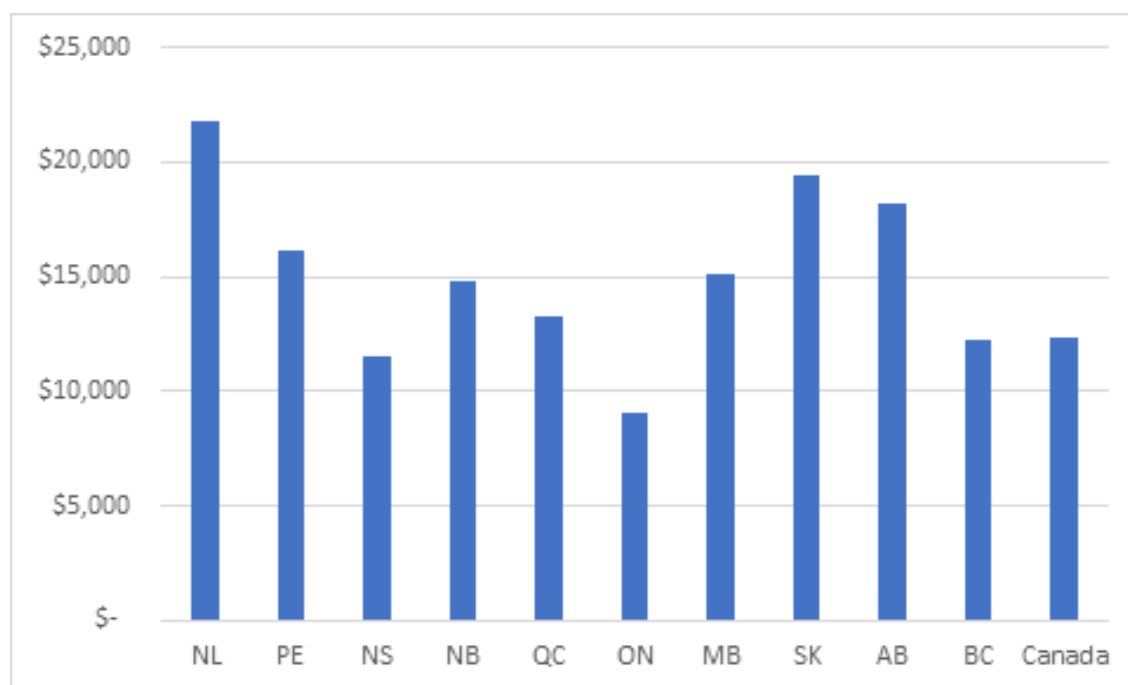
The Confederation of University Faculty Associations of British Columbia (CUFA BC) recommends:

1. Redressing the chronic underfunding of postsecondary institutions in BC, including the concomitant issues of precarious employment.
2. Providing greater institutional autonomy to universities by excluding research universities from the controls of the Public Sector Employers' Council.
3. Following through on the fifty-million-dollar government commitment on the graduate scholarship program and expansion to include non-STEM disciplines.
4. Redesigning the Knowledge Development Fund program to a system of arm's-length peer-reviewed grants for research that addresses the most pressing social, economic, cultural, and environmental challenges.

## 1. Redressing Chronic Underfunding at BC Research Universities

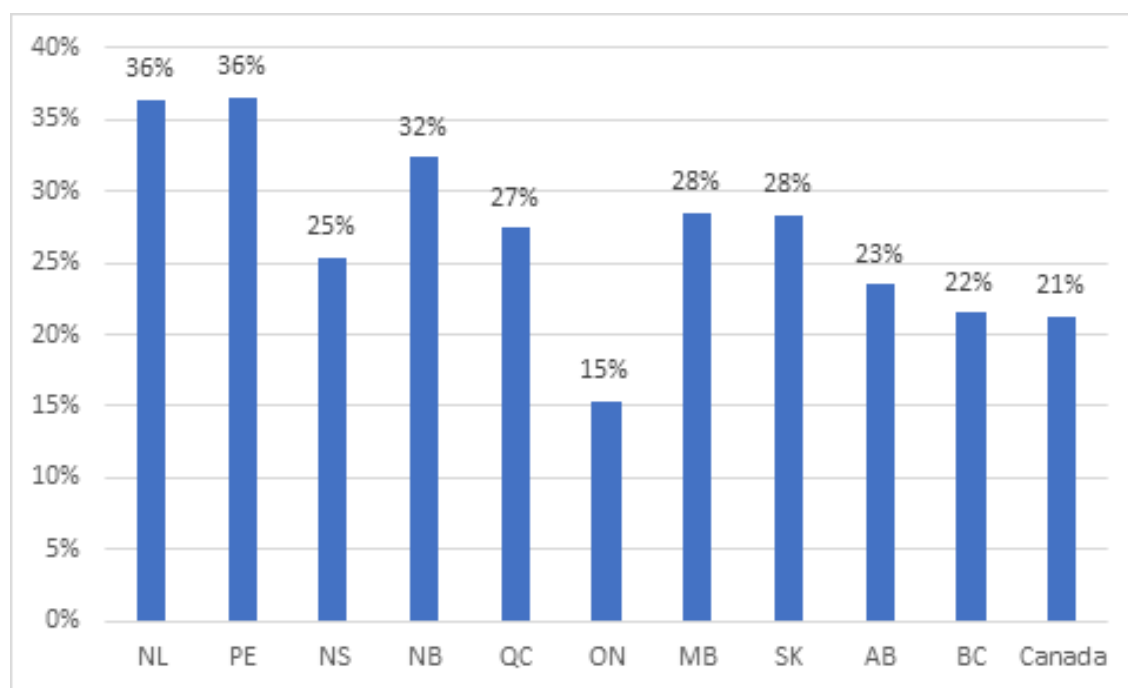
The 2020 provincial budget consultation documents boast that "British Columbia is a leader in economic growth" and has made "significant progress delivering improved health care, education and child care" for its residents. While these achievements are welcome, CUFA BC encourages the government now to focus efforts on strengthening the post-secondary sector, which has often played a contributing role to both social development and diversification of the economy.

One of the most pressing priorities for CUFA BC is the chronic underfunding of post-secondary institutions. Whether measured in dollars or in percentage of per-capita GDP, this province lags behind others despite its robust economy. Looking at transfers in actual dollars in the chart below, BC is marginally ahead of only Ontario and Nova Scotia. BC is losing its competitive edge in recruitment of both students and faculty at research universities as a result of low financial support.



**Figure 1: Provincial Government Transfers to PSE Institutions per FTE Student, 2015-2016.** Source: Higher Education Strategy Associates.  
<http://higherstrategy.com/comparing-provincial-expenditures-on-post-secondary-education>

Looking at the percentage of per-capita GDP in the chart below, BC's contributions (at 22%) rank second-last in the nation, while other provinces contribute substantially more to post-secondary education, such as Quebec's 27% or Newfoundland's 36%. The provincial government's contributions as a percentage of per-capita GDP are ahead of only Ontario's and again telegraph systemic under-resourcing of post-secondary institutions.



**Figure 2: Per-Student Provincial Transfers to Institutions as a % of GDP per Capita, 2015-16.** Source: Higher Education Associates. <http://higherstrategy.com/comparing-provincial-expenditures-on-post-secondary-education>

Stagnant funding for research universities limits BC's attainment of its full potential. Research conducted at universities is crucial to solving the most significant problems we face: social, environmental, and technological. Education and training conducted at universities are key to managing the looming labour shortage, which will be particularly acute in areas that require higher education. And in the current term, underfunding has helped produce reliance on precarious employment contracts, which disproportionately affect members of equity-seeking groups, such as women and indigenous faculty.<sup>1</sup>

Faculty associations see first-hand the experiences of contract academics who are piecing together incomes from one contract to another and sometimes on serial four-month contracts. These are academics who have spent many years attaining terminal degrees, often incurring significant debt to do so, only to live paycheck to paycheck and contract to contract. Despite popular stereotypes of contract academics as "moonlighters," the majority of contract academics are not working professionally outside of their teaching and altruistically "giving back" to their professions by taking low-paid gig contracts. Rather, contract faculty are academics who want to work full time, with fair wages and job security and integrity, and who want to build meaningful supervisory relationships with students so that they too can participate in research opportunities, independent studies, integrated programs, the writing of reference letters, graduate mentorship, etc.

<sup>1</sup> For more on this point, see Canadian Association of University Teachers, *Underrepresented and Underpaid: Diversity & Equity Among Canada's Post-Secondary Education Teachers* (Ottawa: Canadian Association of University Teachers, 2018), p. 2.  
[https://www.caut.ca/sites/default/files/caut\\_equity\\_report\\_2018-04final.pdf](https://www.caut.ca/sites/default/files/caut_equity_report_2018-04final.pdf)

At CUFA BC's presentation in Prince George on June 18, 2019, members of the Committee asked what measures its five member associations have taken at the bargaining table to address the growing concerns of contingent faculty contracts. Our member associations are at the forefront of this national dialogue and are engaged with their respective university administrations to curb the over-reliance on contract academic work. Faculty associations form but one part of a two-party collective agreement, and the university administrations express their own concerns with committing to continuous, tenure-track employment for individuals when they are faced with chronic underfunding and the constant threat of financial insecurity. In addition, the inhibitory role of PSEC (see below) can be seen when mechanisms are proposed that might allow for one-time conversion of contract academics into continuing positions. Universities are also facing steep competition with the private sector both nationally and internationally that further contribute to structural impediments in creating regular academic positions.

There are solutions to these concerns in the form of targeted financial support for the explicit purpose of converting long-term contract faculty into regularized positions. Such targeted funding would go a long way to assuaging the immediate concerns of the university administrations and, considering the demographics of casualized academic labourers, would simultaneously address the government's budget consultation goals of advancing gender equality and true, lasting reconciliation.

We hold the overarching view that government should fully reinvest in post-secondary education for research universities to ensure fairness in employment and to make sure that BC is leading the country in knowledge production and the training of highly qualified personnel.

## **2. Institutional Autonomy and the Public Sector Employers' Council**

A critical priority for CUFA BC is one that, though it certainly involves financial issues, is indirectly related to the work of this standing committee. Nevertheless, it is the reality that our members are denied the right to free and fair collective bargaining under the auspices of the Public Sector Employers' Council (PSEC) of BC.

PSEC controls all aspects of collective bargaining in the province and holds especially tight rein of financial matters, constituting overreach into the autonomous bargaining of the union and the employer. Furthermore, this government insertion into bargaining interferes with our ability to bargain on burning topics of precarious academic employment, which intersect with equity and human rights matters, common themes throughout our submission.

We would urge you in your advice to the Minister of Finance to support free and fair collective bargaining for BC's universities to ensure that whatever role PSEC does play is transparent, accountable, and in keeping with the constitutionally protected rights associated with collective bargaining. This direction may seem tangential to the work of this committee, but it is very much directly relevant to the livelihoods of our members as directed by the Ministry of Finance. We respectfully ask you to help end this practice and know that you have significant influence in this regard.

### 3. Follow-through and Expansion of the Fifty-Million-Dollar Graduate Scholarship

CUFA BC is supportive of the government's commitment to fund a fifty-million-dollar graduate scholarship program. To date, however, only \$12 million has been received, and we are asking for a follow-through on the remaining thirty-eight million dollars. We also believe that the remaining money can be used to address an unnecessarily narrowed focus of the scholarship program that will negatively affect students' access to education.

We call attention to the program's focus on students in the disciplines of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). CUFA BC recognizes that the technology sector is growing rapidly and will be important to the future of BC. Moreover, CUFA BC welcomes efforts to increase the participation of Indigenous and women graduate students in STEM, including the Women in Technology and Indigenous Women in Technology scholarships. However, we believe that a graduate scholarship program that *only* targets STEM will not meet the needs of our universities or the province.

Many of the graduates we will need in the future will be drawn from the non-STEM areas, especially to replace an aging civil service. CUFA BC's members supervise graduate students in all disciplines across the academic spectrum, including arts and humanities students who are building successful careers in government. In addition, many of the questions we must solve—including the social, cultural, and ethical questions produced by the growth of STEM—will require extended training and research in the humanities. We would therefore urge you to think broadly when you complete your government's investment in this program. It is our position that a fifty-million-dollar graduate program, extended to all disciplines, would make a remarkable difference in British Columbia's ability to attract the very best graduate students and to retain them so that their future careers continue to build BC.

### 4. Redesign of the Knowledge Development Program

Our final priority is a bold redesign of the Knowledge Development Fund (KDF) program. The Premier announced last year \$125 million in new KDF funding, a remarkable and forward-thinking investment. The KDF has been a crucial funder of research infrastructure at our member institutions, but we believe that the dramatic and welcome infusion of funds into the KDF provide an excellent opportunity to enhance its overall value. Currently, the KDF funds institutions and infrastructure, not actual research. Certainly, the fund's current role as a matcher of CDI infrastructure funding is important and should continue to be a feature of the KDF program, but should not be the KDF's sole role or purpose.

Instead, we would propose to redesign the KDF along the lines of the three federal granting councils that fund research in the humanities, social sciences, engineering, natural sciences, and medicine. Our proposal would call for the majority of KDF dollars to be dedicated to a peer-reviewed system of grants, at arm's-length from the government, focussing on research that addresses the most pressing social, economic, cultural, and environmental challenges facing British Columbia today. There are models within Canadian provinces that can guide this vision; we draw your attention to one in particular that serves as a gold standard for a provincially funded research program.

Quebec has created three independent provincial research funding agencies that promote and financially support research, knowledge dissemination, and research training. The *Fonds de recherche du Québec (FRQ)*<sup>2</sup> supports researchers in three areas: 1) natural sciences and engineering; 2) social sciences and humanities (including arts and literature); and 3) biomedical and health sciences. The provincial government contributes dedicated research money to each funding agency, which in turn makes decisions based on a peer-reviewed model of evaluation much like the federal tri-council funding agencies (CIHR, NSERC, and SSHRC).

As of 2019, the Quebec government contributed \$60 million to the natural sciences and engineering research fund, \$58 million to social sciences and humanities research fund, and \$95.6 million to biomedical and health sciences.<sup>3</sup> Within each of these funds, the money is allocated to primary research projects at universities and colleges, research groups, graduate and undergraduate student training and mentorship projects, community research partners, as well as careers in research supporting fellows, clinicians, and research support staff.

Given its economic health and resiliency, British Columbia is well situated to invest in post-secondary academic research. The KDF redesign we propose would be a bolder, more comprehensive approach to research in British Columbia and would improve upon the KDF as initially envisioned by the province. The research universities continue to be one of the most important sources of creative solutions to the pressing challenges we face as a society. Enhanced investment in the KDF will catapult BC to the forefront of research advancement in all *STEAM* disciplines; that is, science, technology, engineering, math, and the arts, including humanities, language arts, dance, drama, music, design, and more.

## Summary

As the provincial body that represents more than 5,500 academics at BC's research-intensive universities, we speak with the voice of thousands of faculty members, lab instructors, sessional instructors, and professional librarians.

Our strategic priorities address core goals of the 2020 budget by advancing gender equity, reconciliation, access to education, and building a strong, sustainable economy. Our recommendations focus on redressing the state of chronic underfunding at BC's research universities, ensuring fair collective bargaining for our member associations, following through on the graduate scholarship program funding and expanding the program to all disciplines, and redesigning the Knowledge Development Fund to a more comprehensive and inclusive research model.

The government of British Columbia has an opportunity to prioritize post-secondary education in this year's budget. Now is the time to make investments in this sector to help universities continue to produce top-rate research invaluable to the public and private sectors in this

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.scientifique-en-chef.gouv.qc.ca/le-scientifique-en-chef/les-fonds-de-recherche-du-quebec>

<sup>3</sup> FRQ Natural Sciences & Engineering Facts & Figures: <http://www.frqnt.gouv.qc.ca/en/le-frqnt/faits-et-chiffres>

FRQ Social Sciences & Humanities Facts & Figures: <http://www.frqsc.gouv.qc.ca/en/le-frqsc/faits-et-chiffres>

FRQ Biomedical & Health Sciences Facts & Figures: <http://www.frqs.gouv.qc.ca/en/le-frqs/faits-et-chiffres>

province. These investments will also meet the needs of a large student body that depends on university education for a successful future as productive and creative citizens in a diversified and complex knowledge economy.

We thank the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services for its willingness to meet with us and to listen to our suggestions for the 2020 provincial budget.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Jacqueline Holler  
President  
Confederation of University Faculty Associations of BC