



JUST RECOVERY FOR STUDENTS

PRESENTED BY THE CANADIAN FEDERATION OF STUDENTS - NS

everyone deserves
a liveable future

WHO WE ARE

The Canadian Federation of Students is Canada's largest and oldest student organization, uniting over 530,000 college, undergraduate and graduate students from coast to coast. The Federation and its predecessor organizations have advocated for the interests of post-secondary students in Canada for more than 90 years. The Federation's ultimate goal is to achieve a universal system of high-quality, public, tuition-free post-secondary education in Canada for domestic and international students. In Nova Scotia we represent students at six universities.

JUST RECOVERY FOR STUDENTS

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed everything. It has created an economic, health, and social crisis, and contributed to hardship for all Nova Scotians.

For students this has meant moving to online classes, taking on more debt, housing and food insecurity, and prospects of a challenging and unpredictable job market. The COVID-19 pandemic has only underlined systemic injustices in our society, and it is marginalized students who have been the hardest hit.

Students are joining together to present a vision for a just recovery for post-secondary education in Nova Scotia.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1 INVEST IN EDUCATION FOR ALL

2 GRANTS NOT LOANS

3 ADDRESS IMMEDIATE NEEDS OF STUDENTS

4 ENSURE FAIRNESS FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

5 SUPPORT YOUNG WORKERS



RECOMMENDATION 1

INVEST IN EDUCATION FOR ALL

Post-secondary education in Nova Scotia has been underfunded and inaccessible for many years. The COVID-19 pandemic is pushing the system to the breaking point.

We have the opportunity to live up to our potential as a destination for post-secondary education and become leaders in creating a livable future.

We have a responsibility to ensure Indigenous students have access to post secondary education. The demographics of Mi'kmaq people is younger than the general population of the province. Those self reporting to be First Nations in the Atlantic provinces more than doubled in the last fifteen years.¹

However, access to post-secondary education for Mi'kmaq students continues to be a challenge because of the high cost of entry and historical injustices. This lack of access both disadvantages Mi'kmaq students, violates the principles and commitments under the TRC, and jeopardizes the future economy of Nova Scotia.

In addition to all the other pressures of the pandemic, Nova Scotia students watched their tuition fees continue to rise. It's time for government and universities to get serious about the skyrocketing cost of education.

**EDUCATION FOR ALL MEANS
UPHOLDING OUR TREATY
RESPONSIBILITIES, ENSURING
ACCESS FOR EVERYONE, AND
PROPERLY SUPPORTING OUR
INSTITUTIONS**

- a. Commit to an immediate tuition fee reduction of 10% to reduce the financial burden on students - \$34 million**
- b. Commit to supporting a funding framework that would eliminate tuition fees with a 50/50 funding model with the federal government through a new education transfer - \$500 Million**
- c. Pass legislation requiring open board meetings at all universities to increase transparency and ensure accountability of public funds**
- d. Invest in the infrastructure and development of regional Open Educational Resources to increase access to resources for students, save money, and allow faculty to have flexible, engaging, and current materials for their courses - \$298,101**

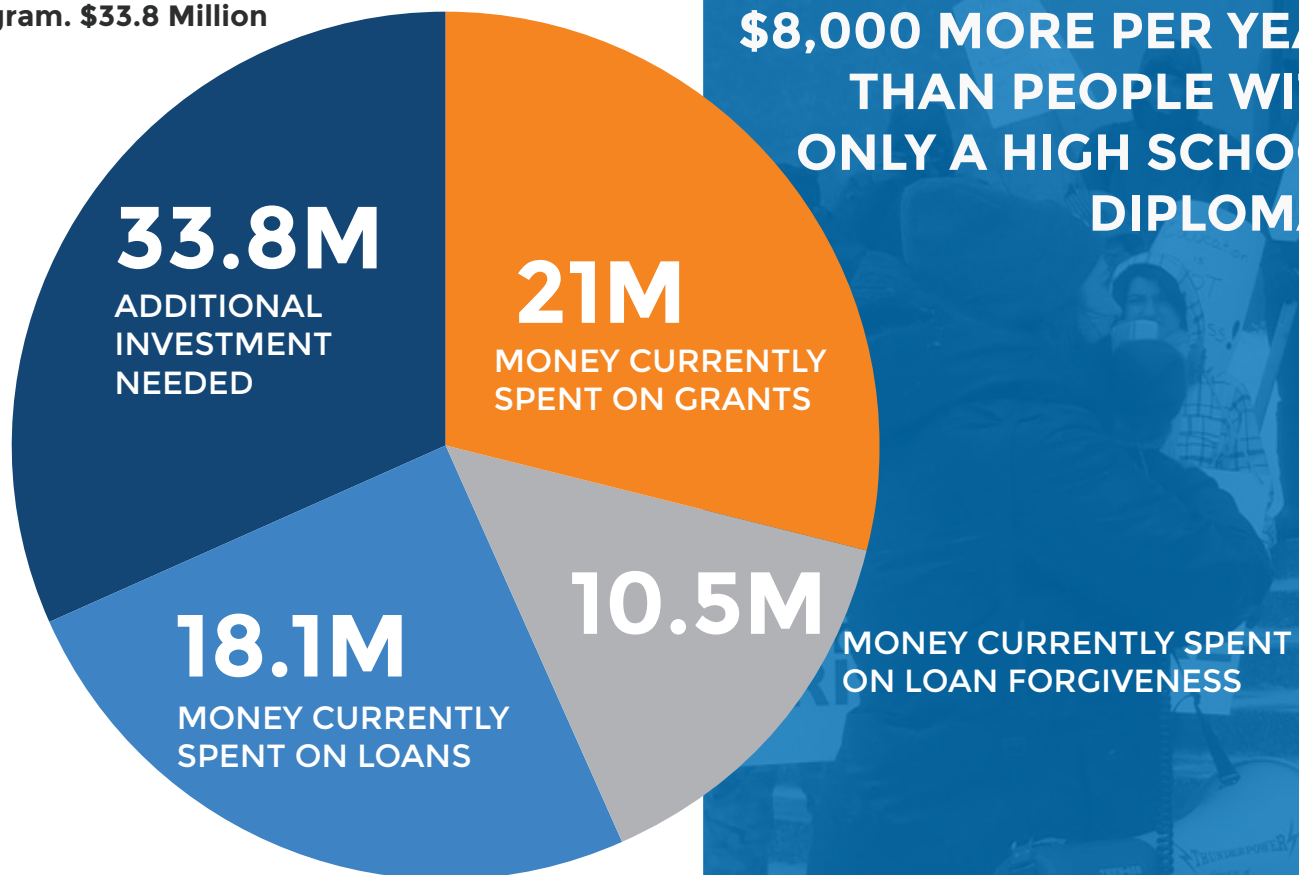
**STUDENTS WATCHED
TUITION FEES RISE
DURING THE PANDEMIC²**

RECOMMENDATION 2 GRANTS NOT LOANS

While there is some debt relief for students in Nova Scotia through the loan forgiveness program, the reality is that a loans based model results in students who are unable to pay upfront having to spend more to get an education.

Nova Scotia could invest in a 100% grant based model with an investment of only 0.03% of the current provincial budget.³

a. Convert all student loans to grants and reallocate the funds from the loan forgiveness program. \$33.8 Million



OUR CURRENT PROGRAMS PUNISH PEOPLE WHO ARE UNABLE TO FINISH THEIR DEGREES. BUT ANY POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION IS BETTER THAN NONE: PEOPLE WITH SOME COLLEGE EXPERIENCE EARN \$8,000 MORE PER YEAR THAN PEOPLE WITH ONLY A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA.⁵

DID YOU KNOW?

Student debt creates economic drag and causes students to delay making large purchases and life choices, and actually reverses the positive upward mobility associated with pursuing a postsecondary degree. Targeted debt cancellation would stimulate the economy, increase spending and disposable income, and increase GDP and labour mobility while decreasing average unemployment.⁴

RECOMMENDATION 3

ADDRESS IMMEDIATE NEEDS OF STUDENTS

We are living through a pandemic that has underlined systemic injustices in our society and highlighted that it is essential to support people by providing strong social services and education. We need to immediately invest in measures to support students with action that will benefit our communities long term.

a. Address sexualized violence on campus and in our communities:

- Work directly with sexual assault centers to establish long term core funding for community sexual assault services in the province. - \$3 Million

STUDENTS ARE FREQUENT USERS OF PROVINCIAL SEXUAL ASSAULT CENTERS THAT ARE ALREADY BEYOND CAPACITY.⁶

- Ensure robust training for students, faculty, and staff. This should include training for students before they arrive on campus, during orientation weeks, and throughout their time as a student. Training for faculty should be done in collaboration with faculty unions. Training sessions should include Breaking the Silence and Waves of Change.

b. Implement full, permanent rent control and a ban on all evictions during the state of emergency.



HOUSING IS A HUGE EXPENSE FOR STUDENTS AND SAFE AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING IS BECOMING HARDER TO COME BY IN HALIFAX AND OTHER UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE TOWNS IN NOVA SCOTIA. THE AVERAGE PRICE OF A TWO-BEDROOM APARTMENT IN

HALIFAX HAS INCREASED 43% IN THE LAST FIVE YEARS, MINIMUM WAGE HAS ONLY GONE UP 15%.⁷

c. Work with internet providers to offer a low-cost internet package for students. Commit to investigating the development of public infrastructure to provide high quality, uncapped access to the internet for all Nova Scotians.

PEOPLE LIVING IN RURAL AREAS DEAL WITH DOWNLOAD SPEEDS 10 TIMES SLOWER THAN THOSE IN URBAN AREAS.⁸

RECOMMENDATION 4

ENSURE FAIRNESS FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Our post-secondary education system relies on international students to pay exorbitant fees to keep our universities financially viable. International students bring so much to our communities, campuses, and local economies and when it came time to receive relief during the COVID-19 crisis they were left out, as we saw with the COVID-19 response grant.

a. Eliminate differential fees for international students as an emergency measure for affordability - \$130 million

b. Remove barriers to accessing health care and provide immediate Medical Services Insurance (MSI) upon arrival for students in secondary and post-secondary institutions, as well as migrant workers to ensure they have access to critical medical care and vaccination in our fight against COVID-19 - \$3 million

c. Ensure all emergency measures take into account the challenges faced by international students, workers, and their families. All relief measures for students and post-secondary institutions need to include international students

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We pay the same amount in rent, taxes, and a higher amount for our tuition. When it came to being handed a life line, we were forgotten.

THE CURRENT SYSTEM ISN'T WORKING:

ONLY 1/3 OF ELIGIBLE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS ARE ACCESSING MSI⁹

RECOMMENDATION 5 SUPPORT YOUNG WORKERS

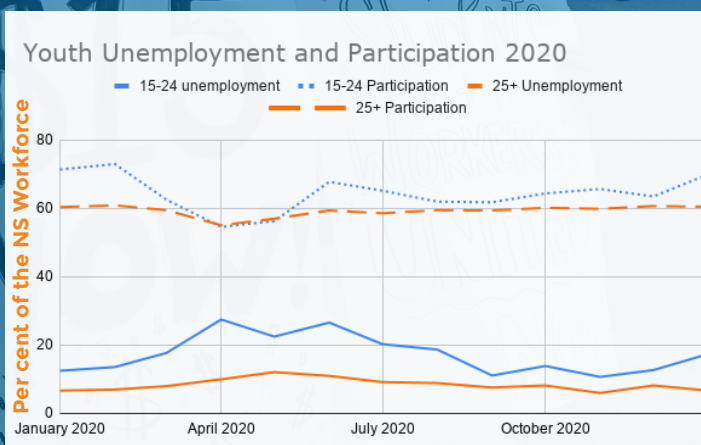
The impact of the pandemic on youth employment in Nova Scotia is massive, with missed work and skills development for youth workers. Despite trying harder to get work students face disproportionately high unemployment. With a persistently low minimum wage students need support now.

a. Implement an immediate emergency top-up to increase wages to \$15/hour in order to account for work precarity, high unemployment rates, and an over-representation of young workers in frontline positions.

Despite trying harder to get work students face disproportionately high unemployment.¹⁰

b. Ensure that students who require co-op or experiential learning to complete their courses are not penalized if they cannot find placement during the pandemic.

YOUNG WORKERS HAVE BEEN HIT THE HARDEST



OVERVIEW OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1 INVEST IN EDUCATION FOR ALL

- Commit to an immediate tuition fee reduction of 10% **\$34 million**
- Commit to supporting a funding framework with the federal government that would eliminate tuition fees through a 50/50 funding model with the federal government **\$500 Million**
- Pass legislation to hold open board meetings at all universities
- Invest in the infrastructure and development of regional Open Educational Resources **\$298,101**

2 GRANTS NOT LOANS

- Convert all student loans to grants and reallocate the funds from the loan forgiveness program. **33.8 Million**

3 ADDRESS IMMEDIATE NEEDS OF STUDENTS

- Address sexualized violence on campus and in our communities:
 - Funding community sexual assault services **\$3 Million**
 - Ensure robust training for students, faculty and staff.
- Implement full, permanent rent control and a ban on all evictions during the state of emergency
- Work with internet providers to offer a low-cost internet package for students. Commit to investigating potential for developing public infrastructure.

4 ENSURE FAIRNESS FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

- Eliminating international student post-secondary differential fees **\$130 million**
- Provide immediate Medical Services Insurance (MSI) upon arrival for all international students and migrant workers **\$3 million**
- Ensure all emergency measures take into account the challenges faced by international students, workers, and their families.

5 SUPPORT YOUNG WORKERS

- Implementing an immediate emergency top-up to increase wages to \$15/hour
- Ensure that students who require co-op or experiential learning to complete their courses are not penalized if they cannot find placement during the pandemic.

CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY

We have the tools, vision and means to take this moment of crisis and push us into the future. Education is a key element that will provide a just recovery and livable future for all Nova Scotians. There has never been a better time to act. We are looking to our elected leadership to make the necessary investments today so all Nova Scotians can thrive tomorrow

HOW ARE WE GOING TO PAY FOR IT?

In addition to seeking greater partnership with the federal government, much of the costs associated with our proposals could be covered with the following revenue offsets.¹¹

Introduce a Carbon Tax: \$154 million

Shift federal tax deductions and non-refundable credits to provincial refundable tax credits: \$239 million

1% increase on top two tax brackets: \$54 million

Fully tax capital gains: \$78Million

**TOTAL COST OF STUDENTS
RECOMMENDATIONS:**

\$540MILLION

TOTAL COST OF OFFSETS:

\$525MILLION

**TOTAL COST OF STUDENTS
RECOMMENDATIONS MINUS
OFFSETS:**

\$15MILLION

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FÉDÉRATION CANADIENNE DES ÉTUDIANTES ET
ÉTUDIANTS-NOUVELLE-ÉCOSSE

END NOTES

- 1 Aboriginal peoples in Canada: Key results from the 2016 Census, StatsCan <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/171025/dq171025a-eng.htm?lnk=dai-quo&indid=14430-1&indgeo=3>
- 2 Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission https://www.mphec.ca/media/183678/Table-A_Tuition-ancillary-and-residence-fee-data-2019-20.pdf
- 3 Nova Scotia Budget 2020 to 2021 <https://novascotia.ca/budget/>
- 4 Brad Hershbein, A college degree is worth less if you are raised poor. Brookings Institute. 2020 <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/social-mobility-memos/2016/02/19/a-college-degree-is-worth-less-if-you-are-raised-poor/>
- 5 Michael Greenstone Adam Looney, Is Starting College and Not Finishing Really That Bad? The Hamilton Project 2013 https://www.hamiltonproject.org/papers/what_happens_to_students_who_fail_to_complete_a_college_degree_is_some/
- 6 John McPhee, Counselling freeze at Avalon Sexual Assault Centre sparks call for more funding, The Chronicle Herald 2019
- 7 January 2021 Rent Report, <https://rentals.ca/national-rent-report>
- 8 Canadian Internet Registration Authority (CIRA)
- 9 Information provided by NS Department of Health, 2020-2021 Preliminary Enrolments Atlantic Universities
- 10 Statistics Canada, Labour force characteristics, monthly, seasonally adjusted and trend-cycle, last 5 months
- 11 Nova Scotia Alternative Budget 2018