

## Key Issues

### Education for All



In Nova Scotia, domestic undergraduate tuition fees are currently the highest in Canada, at an average of \$9,028 for the 2021-22 academic year, compared to a national average of \$6,693.

Student debt in Canada currently totals \$22.3 billion at the federal level. Students in Nova Scotia are currently provided some debt relief through the Loan Forgiveness Program. However, the program does not cover students in most graduate or professional programs, or students who complete their degree in more than five years, and provides no coverage if the student does not complete their degree.

### Climate Justice



In 2017, Nova Scotia relied on coal for about 55% of its annual electricity needs and still has the dirtiest electricity grid in Canada. Moving Nova Scotia's electricity supply to 90% renewable energy by 2030 would create more than 35,000 new jobs in Nova Scotia. 88% of current oilpatch workers say they would make a career change in the next year if the necessary government supports were in place.

### Fairness for International Students



International student fees are currently deregulated in Nova Scotia. On average, international students pay over 5 times the rate of domestic tuition fees for the same education.

International students are not eligible for Medical Services Insurance until 13 months after their arrival to Nova Scotia, during which time they cannot leave the province for more than 31 days without resetting their wait for coverage.

Over the past two years, international students have also been excluded from most Covid-relief measures and have faced challenges accessing Covid testing, vaccines, and proof of vaccination.

### Wages and Cost of Living



Nova Scotia's minimum wage is currently \$12.95 (increasing to \$13.35 on April 1, 2022), while the living wage for Halifax is calculated to be \$21.80, and for Cape Breton Regional Municipality it is \$17.65. The average price of a two-bedroom apartment in Halifax has increased 43% in the last five years while the minimum wage has only gone up 15%.

### Support for Indigenous Learners



Indigenous learners not only have trouble accessing post-secondary education due to the high cost of tuition fees, but also lack culturally-specific resources and support on campus. In addition, too often syllabi omit history, culture, and languages. Several Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action pertaining to these issues in post-secondary institutions and to Indigenous peoples' right to education and the necessity for language revitalization efforts.

### Health Care & Mental Health Services



Students, facing increasing financial instability due to rising tuition and living costs, are struggling to pay for medications and treatments not covered by their student union's health care plan. Rising mental health concerns have also become increasingly common, especially among students and youth in Canada, with people aged 15 to 24 reporting the greatest decline in mental health during the pandemic at a 20% reduction from 2019 to mid 2020.



## Recommendations

### Education for All

1. Immediate tuition reduction of 10%. Plan for the progressive elimination of tuition for all students by creating a 50/50 cost-sharing model for post-secondary education with the federal government.
2. Increase universities' annual operating grants.
3. Convert all student loans to grants and reallocate the funds from the loan forgiveness program to offset costs.
4. Invest in the infrastructure and development of regional Open Educational Resources.
5. Standardise public access to university board of governors meetings in Nova Scotia, and require boards have public websites that are informative and transparent.



### Climate Justice

1. Commit to bolder climate targets to ensure Nova Scotia and Canada do our fair share to cut carbon emissions.
2. Commit to ending new fossil fuel development, including placing a moratorium on offshore drilling.
3. Address environmental racism by ensuring Mi'kmaq and African Nova Scotian communities are involved in creating and implementing environmental legislation.
4. Create a just transition plan for students and workers in high carbon industries which includes free education for job retraining.



### Fairness for International Students

1. Eliminate differential fees for international students.
2. Commit to regulating international student fees under the next MOU.
3. Provide immediate Medical Services Insurance (MSI) upon arrival for students as well as migrant workers.
4. Provide increased financial support to ensure international students at all Nova Scotia universities have access to international student advisors.



### Wages and Cost of Living

1. Pass legislation for permanent rent control.
2. Work with internet providers to offer a low-cost internet package for students.
3. Commit to investigating the development of public infrastructure to provide high quality, uncapped access to the internet for all Nova Scotians.
4. Raise the minimum wage to \$20/hour to ensure every Nova Scotian can afford all necessities.



### Support for Indigenous Learners

1. Increase funding for bursaries for Indigenous students.
2. Increase funding for Mi'kmaq language resources and courses.
3. Increase funding for land-based programming.
4. Increase funding for hiring Indigenous faculty to create more teaching capacity.
5. Implement data collection of Indigenous student enrollment, Indigenous faculty hiring, and success rates of both.



### Health Care & Mental Health Services

1. Invest in public health care and mental health care systems, including eliminating tuition from care profession programs and paying health care workers adequate wages.
2. Ensure all forms of health care and mental health services are universal and free.
3. Provide evidence-based harm reduction addictions care.
4. Address the causes of illness, mental illness, and addiction by investing in social and economic supports.

