



2020 PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION

Prepared by:
**The Canadian Federation of Students -
Newfoundland and Labrador**

Executive Summary

The Canadian Federation of Students and its predecessor organizations have been the democratic voice of Canada's university and college students for over eighty years. Today, the Federation unites over 500,000 university and college students across Canada, including over 27,000 students enrolled in public postsecondary institutions in Newfoundland and Labrador. The Federation welcomes the opportunity to provide input on the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's budgetary visions.

The provincial budget determines the priorities of the government and plays an essential role in promoting the economic and social prosperity of Newfoundland and Labrador. Although many areas can benefit from government investment, there can be no higher priority than investing in our collective future through postsecondary education. In order for Newfoundland and Labrador to build a strong and qualified labour force that has the ability to compete in a knowledge-based global economy, the provincial government must make a significant investment in transforming public services that can deliver an educated, highly skilled and innovative workforce.

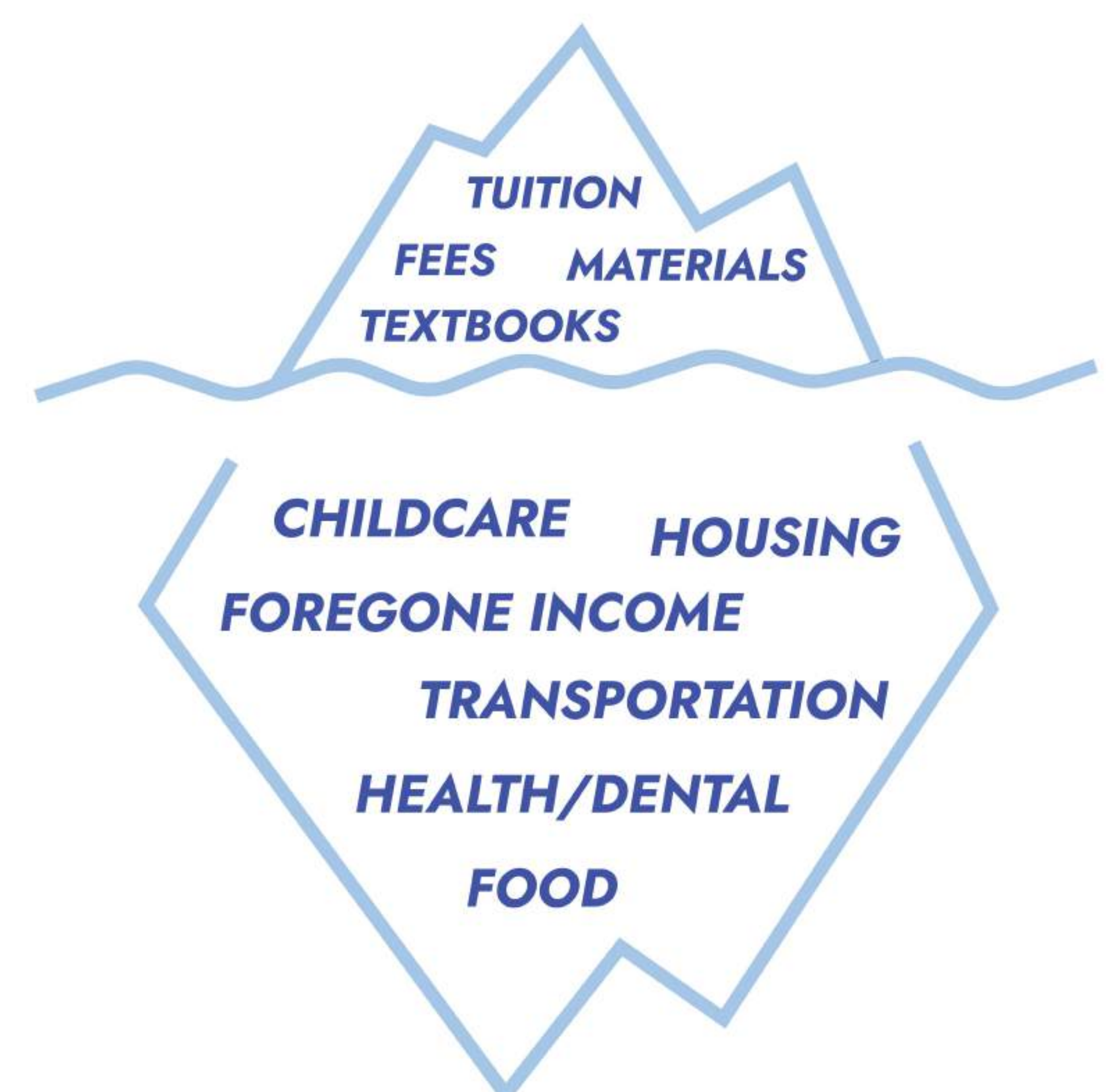
Barriers to post-secondary education must be understood in terms of both gaining access to postsecondary education and the ability to persist in the completion of one's studies. Truly accessible postsecondary education means being able to afford all associated costs of delaying entry into the workforce—including tuition, fees, textbooks, materials, and the cost of living.

Equity cannot be achieved by making investments that benefit a minority of individuals to access postsecondary education. Increases in tuition fees are the result of successive provincial governments incrementally divesting resources from post-secondary education. Canada is one of the most educated countries in the world, however, people from lower-income backgrounds continue to be under-represented in Universities.

Accordingly, the Canadian Federation of Students - Newfoundland and Labrador make the following recommendations for policy changes that will help reduce financial barriers accessible post-secondary education and improve the quality of post-secondary institutions in the province:

Recommendations

- Reinstatement of the tuition freeze for both domestic and international students at all public postsecondary institutions in Newfoundland and Labrador.
- Reinstatement of the full need-based grant system in Newfoundland and Labrador.
- Establish core funding to ensure all rural campuses of Memorial University and the College of the North Atlantic have access to an independent sexual harassment office.
- Establish earmarked funding for students & student groups developing campaigns, resources and initiatives to address sexualized violence in Newfoundland and Labrador such as: the facilitation of support groups that are culturally appropriate; counselling services on all campus; and a Trans Resource Health Centre.



"Truly accessible post-secondary education means being able to afford all associated costs of delaying entry into the workforce - including tuition, fees, textbooks, materials, and the cost of living."

REINSTATE THE TUITION FREEZE FOR BOTH DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AT ALL PUBLIC POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS IN NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR

Differential fees mask the government's divestment of resources from our post-secondary institutions. The partial dissolution of the tuition freeze has resulted in a 30% increase in tuition fees for out-of-province and international students at Memorial University; making international student tuition fees 4.5x the cost of domestic student tuition fees. Implementing accessible post-secondary education requires the political will of the government to prioritize education and social services. The high cost of living and low minimum wage in Newfoundland and Labrador are some of the many barriers to retaining skilled graduates in the province. Reinstating the tuition freeze for both domestic and international students with the goal of progressively reducing tuition fees to the point of elimination is a pivotal step in mitigating the barriers that prevent students from completing their studies and ultimately deciding to stay and meaningfully contribute to the provincial economy.

A study completed by MUN's Faculty of Education, *Matriculating Eastward: Maritime Student Migration to Newfoundland and Labrador*, examined why an increasing number of students from Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island chose to study at Memorial University. It concluded that a comprehensive choice of programs, a strong reputation, and low tuition fees were the primary reasons. In particular, the study found that the enrolment of students from Nova Scotia increased by nearly 100%, where tuition fees are more than double those in Newfoundland and Labrador. It further showed that from 2000 to 2007, the number of Newfoundland and Labrador students leaving to study in the Maritime provinces decreased by 54 percent. These benefits are at risk as out-of-province students no longer have a tuition freeze and fees continue to increase.

As the tuition fee advantage at Memorial University continues to be deliberately deteriorated by policymakers, international students are highly likely to look over Memorial and Newfoundland and Labrador for larger urban centres, especially when combined with the remote location, relatively high cost of travel and challenging climate. Any policy to attract international students will be greatly hindered while differential tuition fees are in place. Increasing tuition fees for international students at MUN by 30% is counterintuitive of the goals in *The Way Forward*, which aims to attract and retain more immigrants by making it easier for newcomers to come to this province and by allowing them to make social and economic contributions. International and out-of-province students can not be used to compensate for deficits within our postsecondary institutions.

Even though the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador has taken important steps to improve student financial assistance, average student debt remains at approximately \$20,000. Starting a life post-graduation with student debt limits other economic milestones. In 2017, only 15% of Newfoundland and Labradorians reported a high likelihood of making a major purchase. The Canadian Association of University Teachers reports that while tuition fees in Newfoundland and Labrador may be among the lowest in the country, more students from the province are forced into debt than the national average. Additionally, UBC researcher Dr. Lori McElroy found that students with little or no debt were more than twice as likely to finish their degrees than students with high levels of debt. The completion rate for students with under \$1,000 of debt was 71 percent, while the completion rate for those with over \$10,000 was 34 percent. Though education should act as a social equalizer, the burden of tuition fees weighs far more heavily on the budgets of the poorest Canadians.

1. Kirby, D., Greene, M., Bourgeois, M., & Sharpe, D. (2011). *Matriculating Eastward: Maritime Student Migration to Newfoundland & Labrador*.
2. *The Way Forward Plan*. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.gov.nl.ca/thewayforward/>
3. *Almanac of Post-Secondary Education 2019*. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.caut.ca/latest/publications/almanac>
4. McElroy, L. A. (2005). *Student aid and university persistence: Does debt matter?*. Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, Chicago

REINSTATE THE FULL NEED BASED GRANTS PROGRAM IN NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

In 2014, Newfoundland and Labrador eliminated provincial student loans for an entire cohort of students. This need-based grant program was championed for choosing to invest and prioritize the social and economic conditions for students in Newfoundland and Labrador, which further enabled students to study and meaningfully contribute to the economy.

The cost of tuition fees is one of the largest barriers to post-secondary education and disproportionately affects those who cannot afford the user fee up front. Students from lower income families are inclined to rely on student loans and effectively pay more than those who can pay up front. This is due to the interest associated with loans being twice and three times the principle amount.

Research has shown that those from families with higher incomes, and even more so, those with higher levels of parental education, are most likely to attend postsecondary education, especially university.

Further to this, Statistics Canada reports notably lower rates of participation from indigenous youth compared to non-indigenous youth (24.3 percentage-point gap); youth whose parents had not attended postsecondary education compared to youth whose parents had (19.8 percentage-point gap); youth from single parent families (10.8 percentage-point gap) and youth who came from families in the bottom third of the income distribution (annual incomes of less than \$50,000) compared to youth from families with higher annual incomes (12.8 percentage-point gap).

The 2017 Newfoundland and Labrador Vital Signs report found that children raised by parents from the bottom fifth income distribution were less likely to rise to the top fifth (8.7%), and more likely to stay in the bottom fifth (32.1%), than that national average.

The growing interest in accessible post-secondary education is driven in part by a desire for equity. Does every student in Newfoundland and Labrador have equal access to postsecondary education, regardless of their families' circumstances? Further to this, is Newfoundland and Labrador providing sufficient tools and opportunities to build a strong and qualified labour force required to be competitive in a knowledge-based global economy?

Access is one part of the story. The other part is persistence, that is, following a program through to graduation. The need-based grant program allowed students to pay tuition and related costs without having to undertake the burden of high interest on a federal student loan. A research study on the ethics of student debt looked at the impact of loan debt on student persistence. The study found that access to student loans had a positive effect on students entering the first year of studies, but further negative impact on persistence throughout the program, finding that students chose to drop out rather than to take on additional loan debt.

In order to improve financial assistance and reduce the burden of debt on the most vulnerable students, the provincial government must reinstate the full needs-based grants program and take steps to ensure economic opportunities and prosperity for the next generation.

5. Free Post-Secondary Education: The case for eliminating tuition fees. Retrieved from: <https://cfsontario.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/FactsheetFreeEducation.pdf>
6. Postsecondary Education Participation among Underrepresented and Minority Groups. (2011, December 14). Retrieved from <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/81-004-x/2011004/article/11595-eng.htm#note1>
7. Finnie, R., Childs, S., & Wismer, A. (2011). Access to post-secondary education among under-represented and minority groups: Measuring the gaps, assessing the causes. Ottawa: Educational Policy Research Initiative, University of Ottawa.
8. Newfoundland and Labrador's Vital Signs Report 2017. Retrieved from: <https://www.mun.ca/harriscentre/vitalsigns>
9. McKinney, L., & Burridge, A. B. (2015). Helping or hindering? The effects of loans on community college student persistence. Research in Higher Education, 56(4), 299-324. Chicago

ESTABLISH SEPARATE EARMARKED FUNDING TO ENSURE ALL RURAL CAMPUSES IN NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR HAVE ACCESS TO A SEXUAL HARASSMENT OFFICER

Students recognize that a significant barrier to accessing and succeeding in post-secondary institutions is the prevalence of sexual violence on campus, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, and gender-based violence. Memorial University of Newfoundland and the College of the North Atlantic are in a unique position to challenge rape culture by promoting consent education, improving on-campus services for survivors of sexualized violence, and establishing strong, standalone, survivor-centred, and student-centred policies. However, these institutions are failing to take all the necessary steps and the provincial government must hold them accountable. The provincial government must take action to combat sexualized violence and implement the necessary requirements to ensure that our post-secondary institutions are prepared to respond to incidents and effectively support survivors.

The majority of the College of the North Atlantic campuses, as well as Memorial University satellite campuses, are located in the most rural areas of Newfoundland and Labrador and subsequently unable

to access more readily available sexual assault supports in larger city centres. The geographical challenges the students on these campuses encounter must not be limitations to the provision and implementation of support for survivors. Therefore, the College of the North Atlantic and Memorial University satellite campuses must not only be given the resources to secure these supports by the government through specific funding and partnerships with survivor support centres, but also with legislation mandating the education of all faculty and staff on every campus must also be passed.

The provincial government must take immediate action and pass legislation, similar to Ontario, Manitoba, British Columbia, Quebec and Nova Scotia to ensure that all institutions have sexual assault policies. This legislation will ensure that students attending any of the postsecondary institutions in the province will be studying on a safer campus.

It is only with the commitment of all shareholders in post-secondary education and the community that we can build a truly accessible, accountable, transparent, effective, and survivor-centred culture of consent. By establishing separate funding to respond to multicampus needs, every student studying in Newfoundland and Labrador, no matter the location, will be protected by more robust policies, procedures and supports to address sexual violence on campus and in our communities.

For these reasons, the Canadian Federation of Students-Newfoundland and Labrador proposes the following recommendations on how the provincial government can best address sexualized violence on campuses and support post-secondary students:

- 1) Pass legislation that mandates all post-secondary institutions in NL to have stand-alone sexual assault policies;
- 2) Identify and include key stakeholders, particularly students, student groups, and providers of survivor support services and local sexual assault centres;
- 3) Review the policy at least once every three years and/or as issues arise;
- 4) Establish funding and an accountability mechanism within the Department of Advanced Education and Skills, and Labour to evaluate and ensure implementation of sexualized violence strategies and policies on all campuses.



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ESTABLISH SPECIFIC FUNDING FOR STUDENTS AND STUDENT GROUPS DEVELOPING CAMPAIGNS, RESOURCES AND INITIATIVES TO ADDRESS SEXUALIZED VIOLENCE

Research continues to support student calls for action on our campuses as 4 out of 5 undergraduate students surveyed at Canadian universities reported experiencing dating violence; 29% of them reported sexual assault with 80% of female-identified student survivors being assaulted by someone they know (i.e. partner, ex-partner, classmate or friend). During the first eight weeks of classes women are at a higher risk of sexual assaults on campus. Furthermore, it is not just physical spaces that threaten marginalized genders, 32% of women surveyed experienced online harassment or cyberstalking.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, violence against marginalized genders and domestic violence is on the rise. In the most recent provincial study, of the 217, 900 women over the age of 15 in the province, approximately 108, 950 (1 in 2) will experience at least one incident of sexual or physical violence throughout their lifetime.

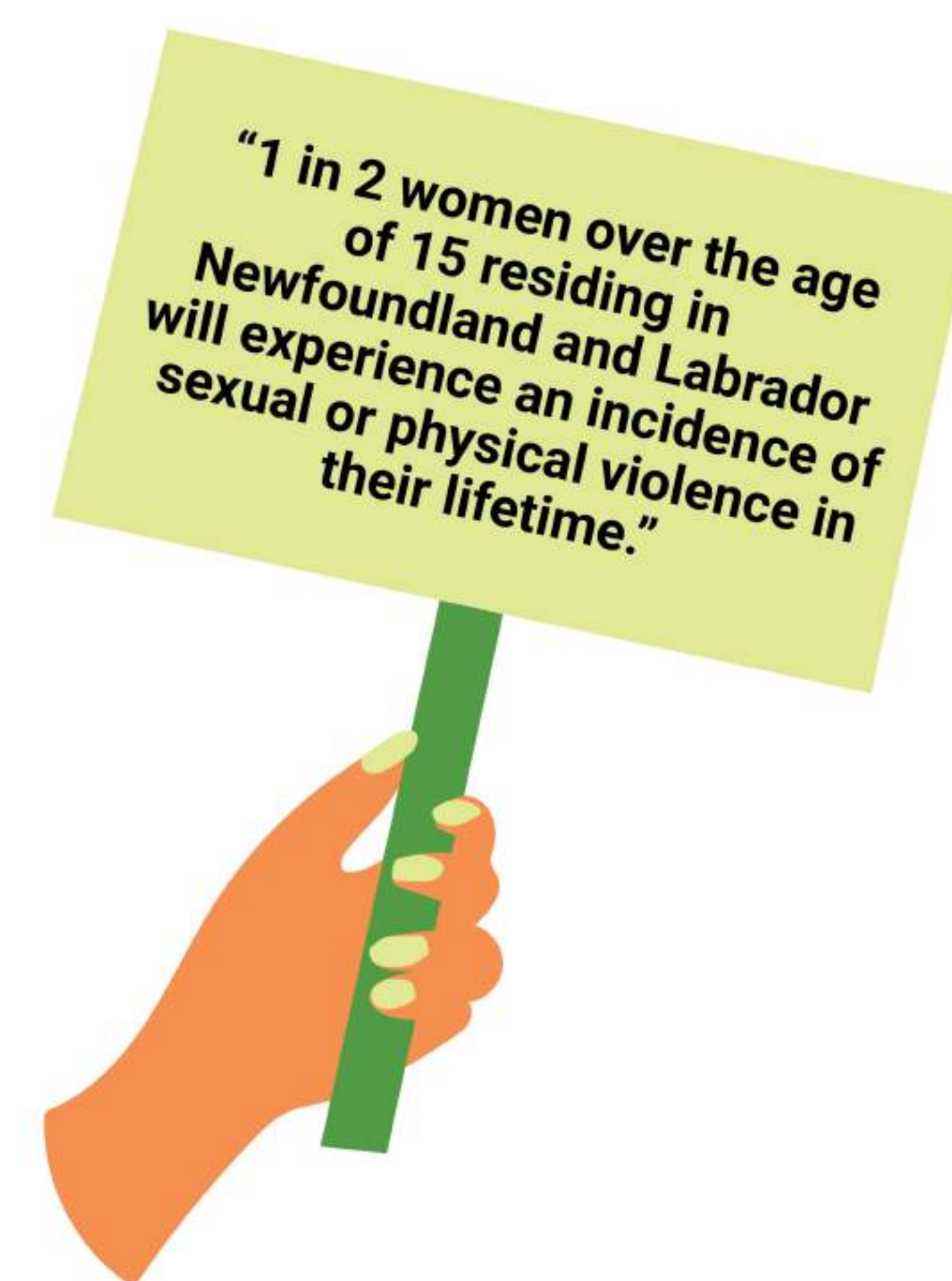
These staggering numbers of sexual harassment speak to the pervasiveness of rape culture on our campuses and the need for provincial legislation to confront sexual violence on campuses in Newfoundland and Labrador.

For too long, student groups have shouldered the financial and emotional costs of combating sexualized violence on campus. While institutions must do their part, student leadership combating sexual violence must also be recognized and adequately supported. While the provincial government has committed funding in the past to execute the province's sexual violence strategy, the Purple Ribbon Campaign and the recent legal support allocated for survivors, there is no funding committed to supporting campus initiatives.

Students at our campuses continue to work hand-in-hand with the support services available in the province. These services are necessary to accompany our campus work with support services that provide safe(r) spaces for students who have experienced violence to receive immediate support that is without judgment, recognizes the courage and strength it takes to come forward, and prioritizes the needs and requests of survivors. These support services can take the form of crisis lines, drop-in support service centres and support groups.

Unfortunately, institutions often prioritize the public image of the institution over the experiences of their students, leaving survivors of sexual assault without necessary supports. In addition to provincial legislation, it is clear that a greater level of accountability is needed in order to ensure institutions comply with the mandated regulations and support victims/survivors on campus.

Recognizing the financial barriers these invaluable non-forprofit organizations face, funding should go to directly support these services that run independent of the administration.



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12. Krebs, CP et al. (2007). The campus sexual assault (CSA) study (Document No. 221153). Washington, DC: National Institute of Justice. Chicago

13. White, W. E., & Carmody, D. (2018). Preventing online victimization: College students' views on intervention and prevention. Journal of interpersonal violence, 33(14), 2291-2307. Chicago

14. Violence Against Women in Newfoundland and Labrador. Retrieved from: https://www.gov.nl.ca/vpi/files/violence_against_women_fact_sheet.pdf

THE CANADIAN FEDERATION OF STUDENTS - NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR

The Canadian Federation of Students Newfoundland and Labrador represents every public post-secondary institution in the province, with over 27,000 members.

Member Locals:

College of the North Atlantic Students' Union

Graduate Students' Union of Memorial University of Newfoundland

Grenfell Campus Student Union

Marine Institute Students' Union

Memorial University of Newfoundland Students' Union

Recommendations

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