

CHARTING A NEW COURSE:

BUILDING A BETTER
POST-SECONDARY
EDUCATION SYSTEM
IN NOVA SCOTIA

Canadian Federation of Students–Nova Scotia

2015

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CONTENTS

- 2** INTRODUCTION
- 4** WHAT DO NOVA SCOTIANS THINK?
- 9** SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS
- 10** WORKING TOWARDS CONSENT CULTURE
- 15** FEES AND STUDENT DEBT
- 19** FUNDING AND ACCOUNTABILITY
- 22** FAIRNESS FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS
- 24** A NATIONAL VISION FOR POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION
- 27** SUMMARY OF COSTING
- 28** SOURCES

INTRODUCTION

Nova Scotia's post-secondary education system, suffering from million of dollars in public funding cuts and an ever-increasing reliance on tuition fees, is heading in the wrong direction. It has never been more expensive to pursue a post-secondary education in Nova Scotia. Many Nova Scotians will now simply choose not to go, despite 70% of jobs being created in our economy requiring at least some post-secondary education. Research shows these lost degree earners are most likely to be from a low-income or marginalised family, further entrenching poverty and marginalisation in these communities. Those who do pursue a degree will graduate with historically high debt loads, either forcing them to leave Nova Scotia to look for better paying work elsewhere, or delaying personal life decisions like buy-

ing a home, starting a family, or pursuing entrepreneurship. This is not a model of post-secondary education that best serves students or Nova Scotia as a whole.

“There is a better path forward, and it's not too late for the Nova Scotia Government to pursue it.”

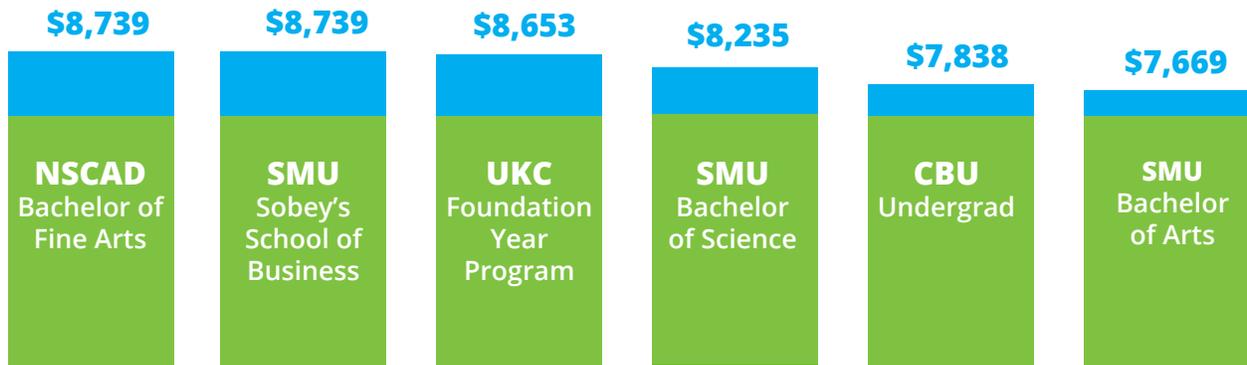
There is a better path forward, and it's not too late for the Nova Scotia government to pursue it. In this document, students lay out their plan on how to build a publicly funded, accessible, and high quality post-secondary education system. It fulfills both the wishes of students, but also aligns with the desires of the Nova Scotia public, as outlined in public

consultations conducted by the Government of Nova Scotia last year. By following our plan, Nova Scotia can reduce youth out migration, combat poverty, grow provincial revenue, and stimulate things like entrepreneurship.

The Government of Nova Scotia should welcome the opportunity to reverse course on some of their decisions made over the past two years, before they do permanent damage to the system. First and foremost the policy of tuition fee deregulation, or as its also been called, tuition fee market adjustments, must be addressed.

The results of deregulating tuition fees have already deviated from the government's initial projections. When the government announced that institutions would have a one-time opportunity to deregulate fees for a non-defined period of

TUITION FEES IN 2018-19 UNDER ANNOUNCED RESETS COMPARED TO NOVA SCOTIA UNDERGRADUATE AVERAGE CAPPED (\$7449)



time, they claimed that it was an opportunity for institutions with tuition fees below the provincial average to catch up. Simply put, if under the 3% tuition fee cap a university's tuition fees were not projected to reach \$7500 by the 2018-19 academic year, the reset could be used as a top-up to increase tuition fees beyond the cap. However, every single tuition fee reset announced by a university so far

exceeds \$7500 by 2018-19. In the most extreme case, NSCAD University will go from having the lowest tuition fees in Nova Scotia to the highest, and exceed the government's target by \$1300. The Department of Labour and Advanced Education had committed to introducing a review process for reset proposals to stop such examples of blatant cash grabs from moving forward, but details of this plan are

still wanting, and recent communication with the department indicates such a review may not even take place at all. The tuition fee free-for-all needs to be reigned in, and a concrete plan put in place to reduce tuition fees, restore public funding, and set Nova Scotia's post-secondary education system on the right path.

WHAT DO NOVA SCOTIANS THINK?

Last winter, Communications Nova Scotia and the Department of Labour and Advanced Education consulted Nova Scotians on what they envisioned for the future of post-secondary education in Nova Scotia.

TUITION FEES

Nova Scotians outright rejected the government's current policy of tuition fee deregulation. Instead, they overwhelmingly supported reducing tuition fees, even if it meant paying higher taxes. Nova Scotians also supported introducing, with external supports like a national Post-Secondary Education Act, free post-secondary education in Nova Scotia.

66% of Nova Scotians believe that student debt is too high in Nova Scotia

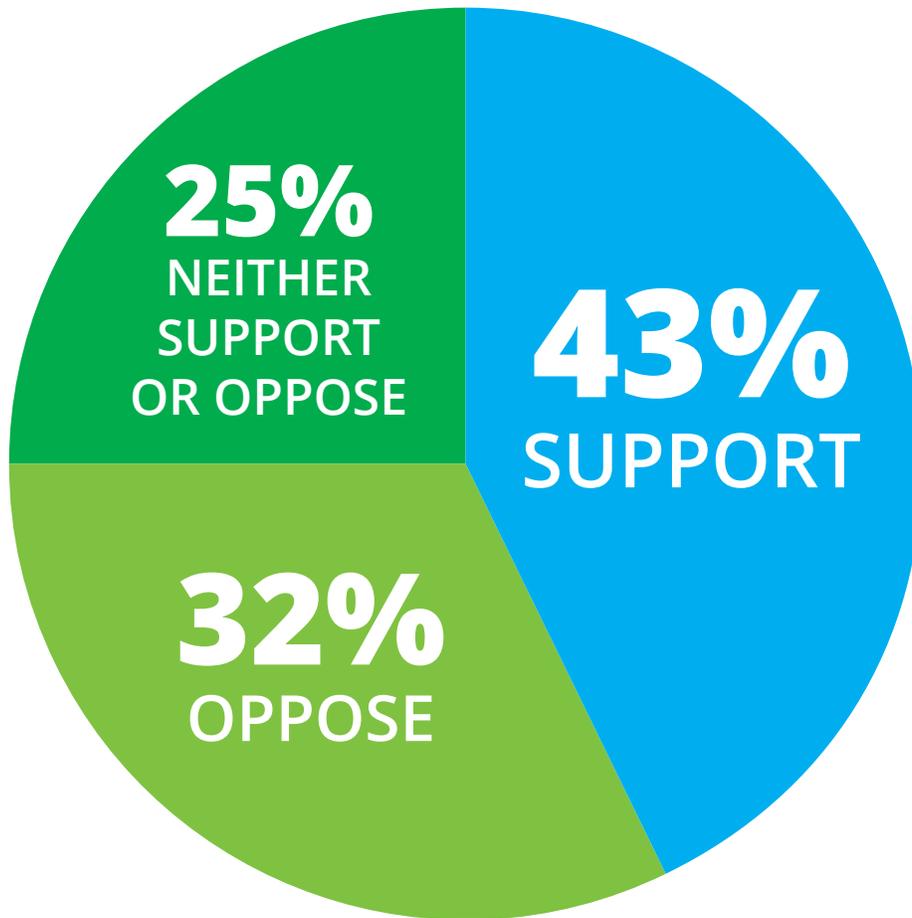
Only 7% of Nova Scotians support increasing tuition fees, but

91% of Nova Scotians do not support tuition fee deregulation, and **89%** disagree that any fees should be permitted to increase

87% of Nova Scotians do not agree that universities have an independent right to decide fee levels

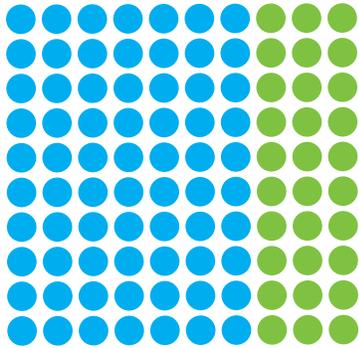
60% of Nova Scotians would be willing to pay higher taxes if it meant reducing tuition fees.

DO YOU SUPPORT A FREE UNIVERSITY EDUCATION FOR ALL WHO WANT TO ATTEND:

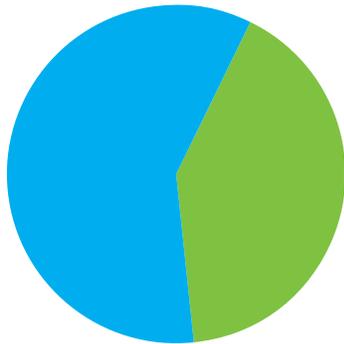


STUDENT ASSISTANCE

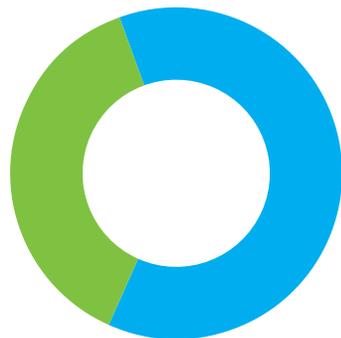
Nova Scotians support making improvements to student assistance programs in Nova Scotia, but believe that the impact of these programs will be negligible unless fees can be brought under control. They also oppose restricting program availability to Nova Scotian students studying outside of Nova Scotia.



70% of Nova Scotians believe the Nova Scotia Student Bursary is an ineffective way to reduce student debt because the amount is too small compared to tuition fee levels.



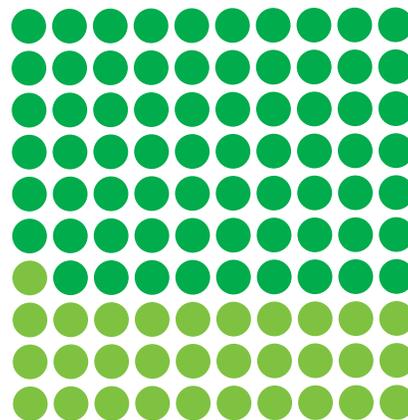
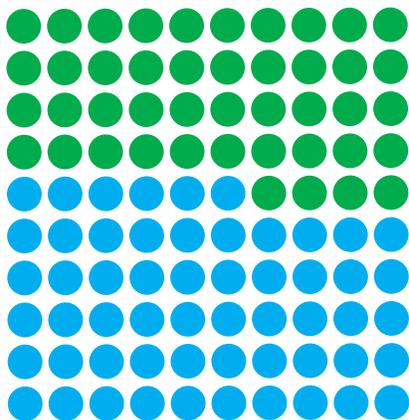
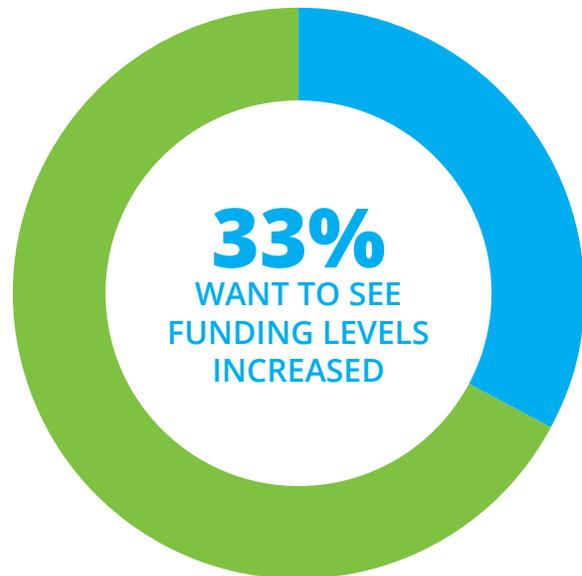
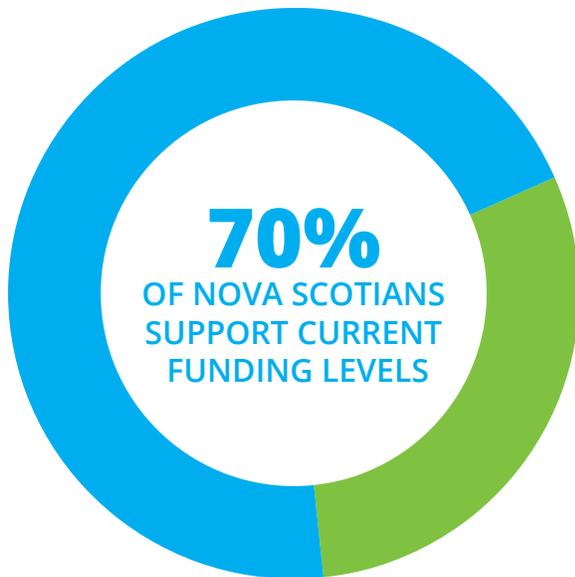
59% believe the most effective way to reduce student debt is to reduce tuition fees.



Only 38% of Nova Scotians supported restricting access to Nova Scotia Student Assistance programs to Nova Scotians studying outside of province.

FUNDING

Nova Scotians want to see public funding remain stable or be increased. Not surprisingly, they also want to see greater accountability in the form of controls around administrator pay. Nova Scotians do not support making cuts to faculty or staff positions as a way to cut operating costs at our universities.

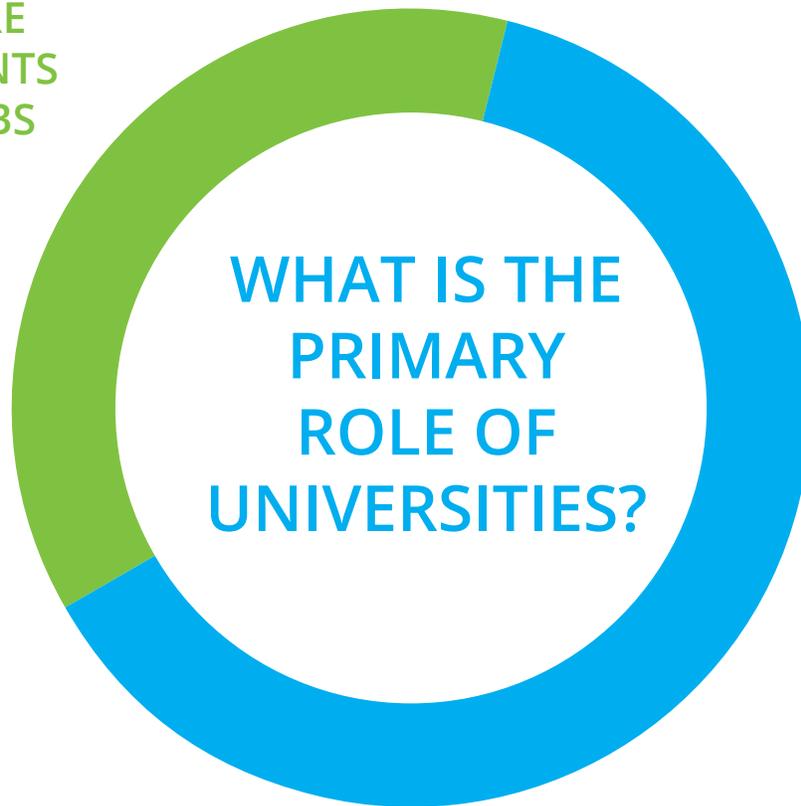


57% of Nova Scotians want to see cuts to administrative spending, compared to just **31%** who supported cutting labour costs

PURPOSE OF A POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

While Nova Scotians are open to the idea of expanding partnerships with the private sector to increase research funding and experiential learning opportunities, they do not believe these partnerships should derail universities and colleges primary role of providing a strong education.

37%
PREPARE
STUDENTS
FOR JOBS



63%
PROVIDE A
STRONG
EDUCATION

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS



WORKING TOWARDS CONSENT CULTURE: PROGRAM DEPENDENT

- Develop and resource education, training and support services at our institutions
- Bring forward legislation to mandate all post-secondary institutions have stand-alone sexual assault policies that are developed – and renewed every 4 years – through a student driven process
- Create a Sexual Assault Support division within the Government of Nova Scotia and establish a long-term Sexual Assault Support Resource Fund available to students, campus groups, universities and Nova Scotia Community College
- Require universities and colleges to report publicly on incidences of sexual violence, as well as initiatives underway to address sexual violence and harassment and their effectiveness



FEES AND STUDENT DEBT: \$48 MILLION

- Reduce tuition fees to 2011 levels
- Freeze ancillary, auxiliary, professional and international student fees
- Convert student loans to grants



FUNDING AND ACCOUNTABILITY: \$30 MILLION

- Restore the university operating grant to 2011 levels
- Make university financial reporting available to the public
- Repeal the Universities Accountability and Transparency Act
- Review provincial legislation to increase student, faculty and staff representation at university governance body
- Review provincial legislation to make university board meetings open to the public



FAIRNESS FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS: \$500,000

- Provide Medical Services Insurance coverage to international students upon their arrival in Nova Scotia



WORKING TOWARDS CONSENT CULTURE

DEVELOP AND RESOURCE EDUCATION, TRAINING AND SERVICES AT POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS

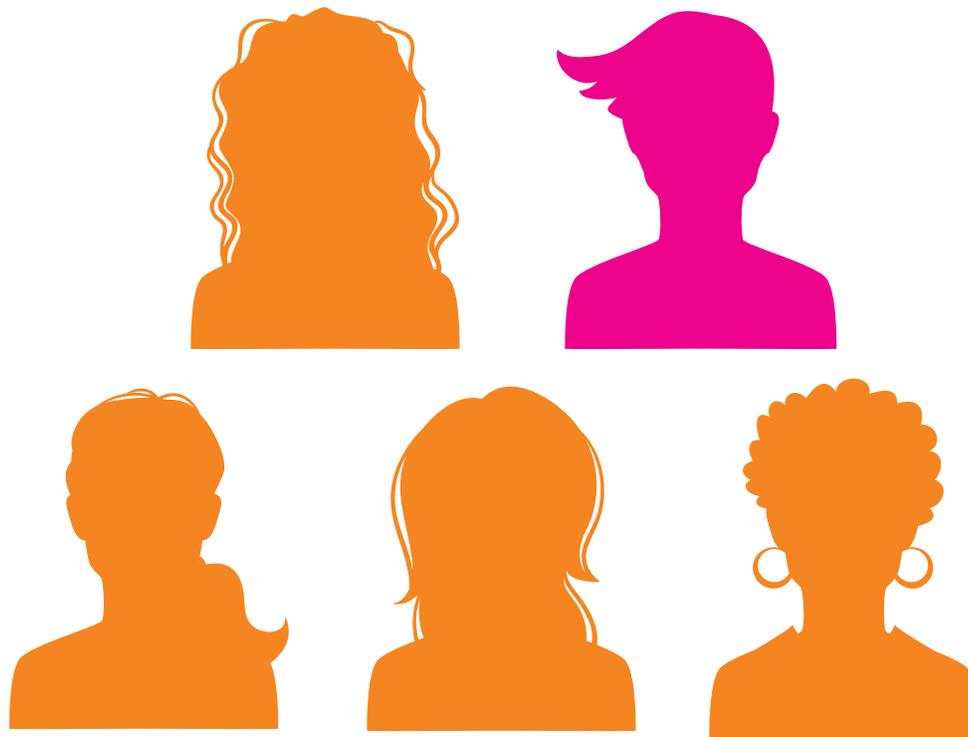
Creating an accessible post-secondary education system must start by ensuring students feel safe on their campus. Sexualized and gender-based violence is an issue that pervades our campuses, creates barriers for students being able to access the classroom, and demands direct attention. Universities and colleges are in a unique position to tackle sexualized violence in the campus community. We all have a responsibility to work to end sexualized vio-

lence on campus and that includes the additional supports of the Nova Scotia government. Universities and colleges are in a unique position to tackle sexualized violence in the campus community.

The reality is that many on campus sexual assaults occur during the first eight weeks of classes. Students starting college or university in Nova Scotia may be unaware of concepts such as consent and/or lack an accurate definition of what

constitutes sexual assault. The start of the school year is a pivotal time to ensure we are educating students about consent. Mandatory consent training is necessary for all incoming students to ensure that we are doing everything we can to prevent incidences of sexual violence on campus.

Much of the data collected over the last thirty years establishes that there are severe short and long term impacts associated with sexualized



1 IN 5 WOMEN STUDYING IN NORTH AMERICAN POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS IS SEXUALLY ASSAULTED

violence. These impacts are compounded when secondary wounding occurs due to lack of competent care when someone who has experienced sexual assault attempts to get help. Students, staff and faculty at our universities and colleges need to have access to training to help mitigate this harm, and ensure that people are getting the care they need. Survivors should have around the clock access to support services.

The Nova Scotia post-sec-

ondary education system is underfunded, and when university administrators are looking to make cuts, women & gender centres, counselling services, and other frontline supports are often targeted. These services are core to our campuses and not ancillary. The support that students need will look different for each institution; institutions need to empower students to make the choices about what services are best suited for the needs of their

campus.

Action must be taken to develop mandatory preventative education, well-funded and varied support resources, and mandatory accountability measures. These actions are the most effective way to combat sexual assault on campus. These resources must not replace current resources allocated to support services on campus. Instead, we must create more robust and complete systems of support.

POLICY REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT

Students are on the front lines of combatting sexualized and gender-based violence on campus. Sadly, and despite pressure from students, college and university administrators have resisted supporting our work. When students experience sexualized violence and harassment on campus, they are often unable to access the support services they need from the institution. This is due to the fact that there are few policies in place, or if they exist, the policies in place are difficult to access and hard to navigate.

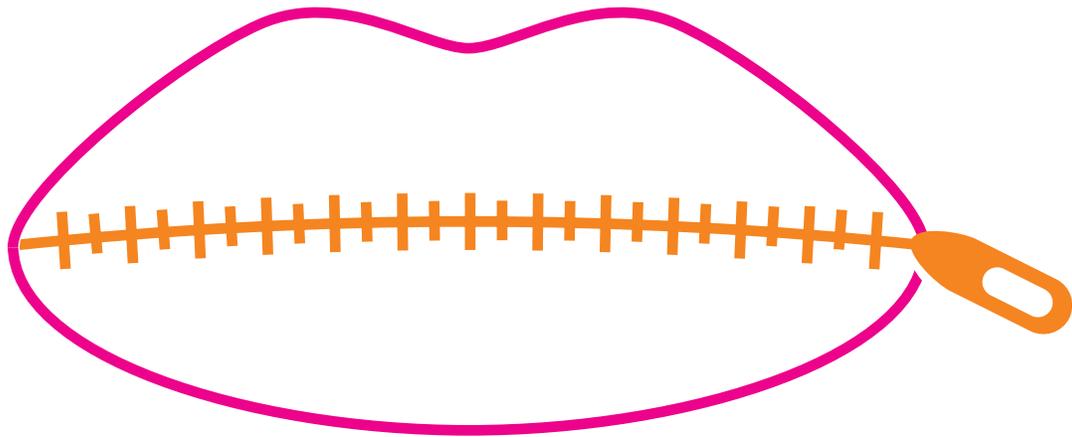
When speaking to incoming students about consent, we also need to talk about what to do if consent is not respected. It is integral that we effectively and clearly explain to students

how to navigate support services and use the policies and procedures that should be designed to help them.

Sexual assault policies are what hold institutions accountable when a student submits a complaint about sexualized violence. This past year, the public saw how profoundly lacking these policies are in the case of the Dalhousie Faculty of Dentistry. In this case, the policies favoured the perpetrator instead of supporting those experiencing harm. There was no arms-length process in place, and students were forced to reveal their identity if they wanted to make any sort of formal complaint. At the same time, the identity of the students who participated in

sexist, misogynist, and violent behaviour remained confidential. Policies like these achieve the exact opposite of providing a student who has experienced sexualized harassment or violence with support and justice. Instead, this approach discourages students who have experienced discrimination, harassment, and violence from coming forward.

These policies vary from campus to campus and must be developed to address the unique context at each post-secondary institution. Students need well thought out, survivor-centered policies, that are developed with students at the forefront of the process.



THE MAJORITY OF SEXUAL ASSAULTS ON CAMPUS GO UNREPORTED

GOVERNMENT OVERSIGHT AND DATA COLLECTION

Students have little to no faith that university or college administrations will properly handle incidences of sexualized violence on campus, and for good reason. At some universities, for example, students have been told that talking about sexual

assault would draw unwanted attention to the fact that it happens on campus. In other instances, students have been told they were over reacting. This is not an acceptable response. Students and the Nova Scotia government should work together to en-

sure university and college administrators are held accountable and prioritize the safety of students.

The provincial government must establish oversight and accountability mechanisms when it comes to sexual assault in the

post-secondary education sector. Universities and colleges are expected to respond to complaints of sexual assault, and when they don't, students often have nowhere to turn for reassurance that their safety will be maintained in the classroom, on campus, and in residence. The government can show leadership and provide a crucial support role for stu-

dents that has been neglected by postsecondary education institutions.

We know that incidents of sexual violence are under-reported in our province and on our campuses. Available data indicates approximately 9 in 10 incidents (88%) of sexual assaults are not reported to the police. College and university administrators are often more

interested in brushing incidences of sexual assault under the rug to preserve their reputation, which further ignores the realities of sexual assault on our campuses and in our communities. If we want to make real progress in ending sexualized violence, we need to know what's really happening on campus and how institutions are responding.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Develop and resource education, training and support services at our institutions
- Bring forward legislation to mandate all post-secondary institutions have stand-alone sexual assault policies that are developed—and renewed every 4 years—through a student driven process
- Create a Sexual Assault Support division within the Government of Nova Scotia and establish a long-term Sexual Assault Support Resource Fund available to students, campus groups, universities and the Nova Scotia Community College
- Require universities and colleges to report publicly on incidences of sexual violence, as well as initiatives underway to address sexual violence and harassment and their effectiveness



FEES AND STUDENT DEBT

STUDENT ASSISTANCE

Students are best served by student assistance programs that provide adequate levels of financial support to students who need it the most, when they need it most, are easy for students and their families to access and understand, and combat the long term impacts of rising student debt levels in Nova Scotia. The Nova Scotia Student Grants program, introduced in 2008, exemplifies such a program. The program provides 40% of a student's provincial student loan as a non-repayable grant. The student receives the assistance on a yearly basis, at the beginning of their term, with the amount being pegged to their need assessment from their student loan calculation.

The best way to strengthen student assistance in Nova Scotia is to increase the grants

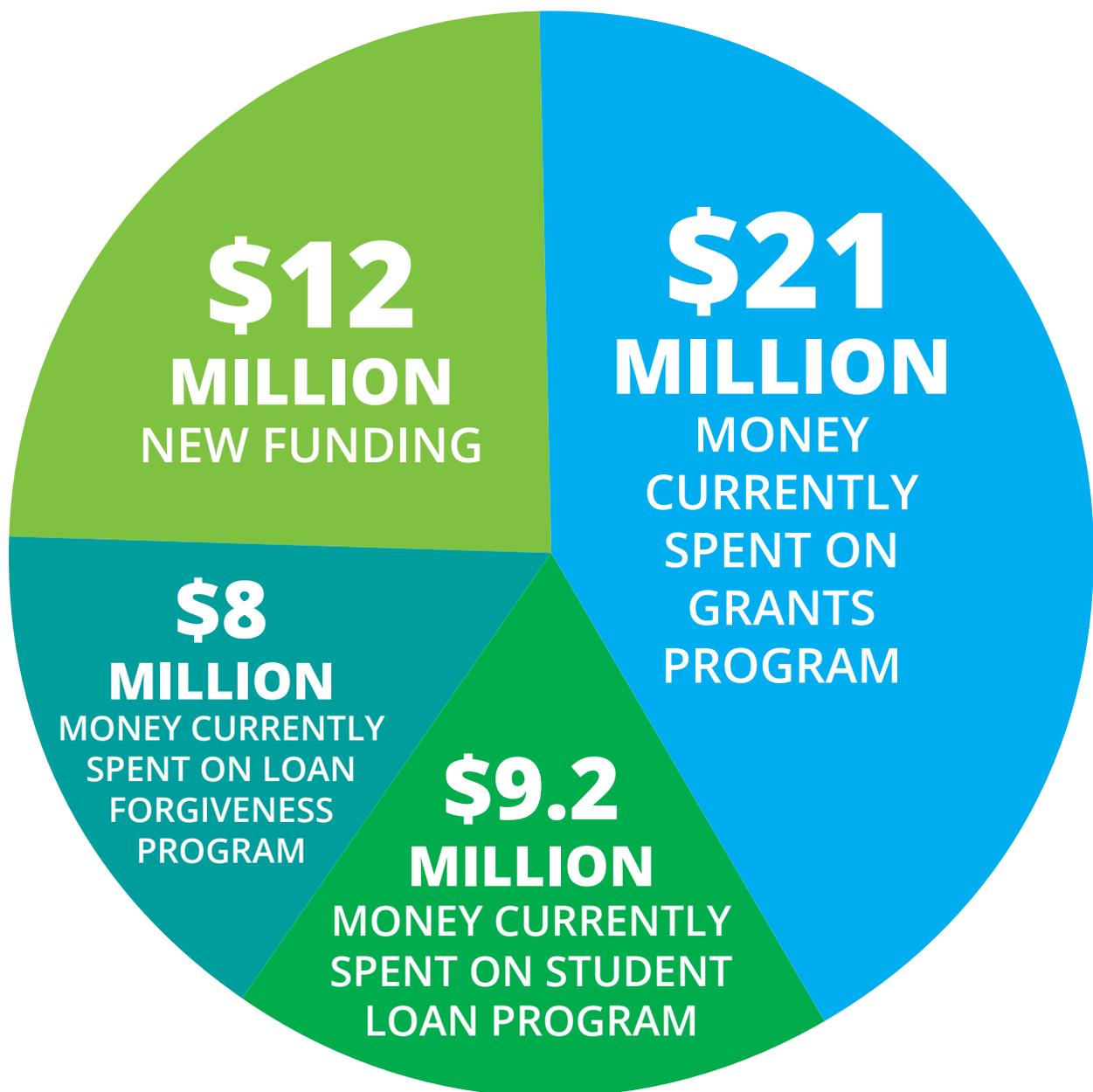
program to cover the entire amount of the provincial student loan, thereby eliminating provincial student loan debt.

Despite the overwhelming evidence supporting a grants based approach to student assistance, the Government of Nova Scotia has adopted a piecemeal approach to assistance programs. This approach fails to support the students who need assistance the most.

Students are currently provided some debt relief through the Loan Forgiveness program, a trimmed down version of the Student Debt Cap program. However, the program does not cover students studying outside Nova Scotia, students beyond their first four years of study, and provides no coverage if the student does not complete their degree. Considering that students from

a low income family are the most likely to take longer than 4 years to complete their degree, or not complete at all, the Loan Forgiveness program fails to provide support to those students who need it most. A 2010 report from the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission shows that students from the Maritimes region are those most likely to extend their study beyond four years. Students may need to extend their degree because of family or work obligations, program changes, or even administrative issues within their program. The government of Nova Scotia should eliminate the Loan Forgiveness program, and use this funding to offset the cost of a 100% grants based student assistance program in Nova Scotia.

HOW TO FUND A 100% GRANTS BASED STUDENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM IN NOVA SCOTIA



TUITION FEES

Tuition fees in Nova Scotia are the third highest in Canada, at \$6817 for the 2015-16 year, compared to the national average of \$6191. This figure marks a 5.2% increase since 2014-15, compared to a 3.2% increase nationally, a rate 4 times that of inflation. 2015-16 was the first year since 2007 where universities could set whatever tuition fee amount they wanted.

Rising tuition fees, and the prospect of student debt, has a detrimental impact on who chooses to attend a post-secondary institution. Polling done by the Nova Scotia Post-Secondary Education Coalition in 2013 found that 1 in 3 Nova Scotians either would not, or knew someone who would not, apply to attend a post-secondary institution because it would mean incurring too much debt.

For those able to afford a post secondary education in Nova Scotia, the challenges continue. Polling by the Canadian Federation of Students shows that an increasing number of students are forced to work part-time during their studies, and 75 per

cent of those who do work say that it undermines their ability to effectively focus on pursuing their degree. A 2013 BMO survey also found that the financial pressure of pursuing a post-secondary education puts more stress on students than achieving academic success in the degree itself. Reducing tuition fees will allow students to focus on pursuing their degree, thus improving the quality of their education.

“*Tuition fees in Nova Scotia are more than double those of our Atlantic neighbour Newfoundland and Labrador.*”

Students pursuing professional programs continue to face the most outrageous fee increases in Nova Scotia. The fees for these programs are entirely deregulated and have increased much more quickly than other fees. Since 1990, average undergraduate tuition fees in Nova Scotia have

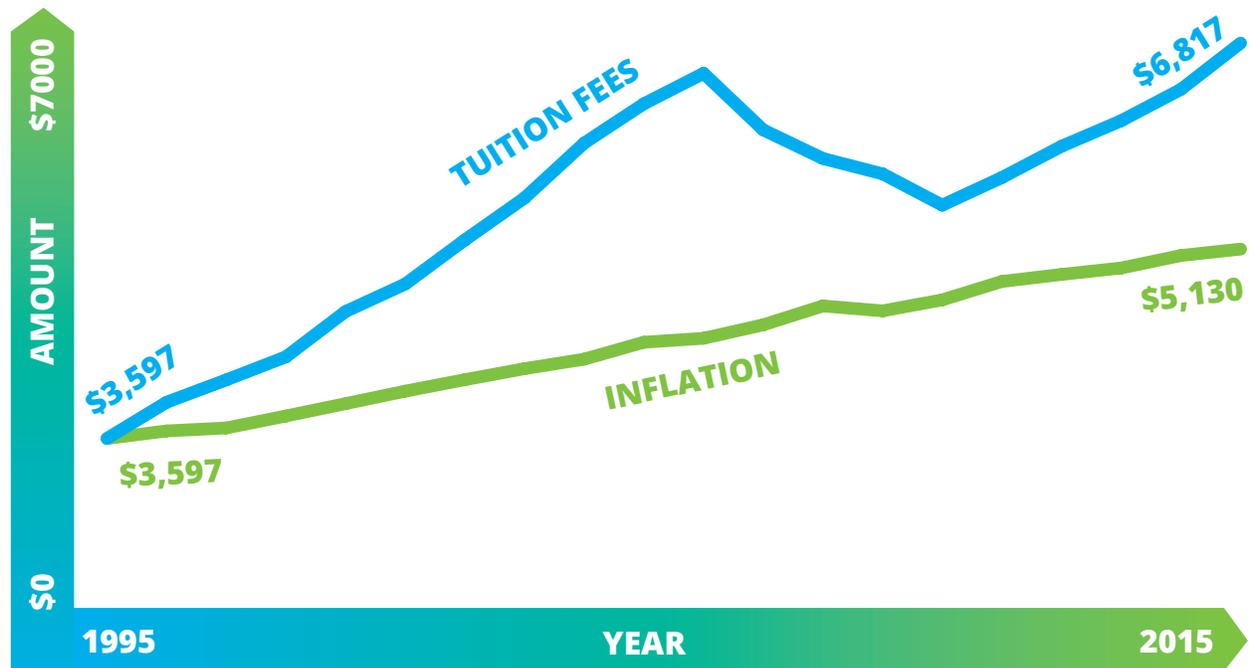
increased at a rate of 230 per cent. In comparison, fees for dentistry have increased by 790 per cent.

A study conducted by Statistics Canada in 2005 investigating the impact of deregulated professional fees in Ontario found that the lack of regulation altered the socio-economic background of students away from low income Ontarians. Considering the incredibly influential role lawyers and doctors play in our society, it is critical that this trend be reversed, and that Nova Scotians, no matter the financial situation they have been born into, are free to pursue these programs.

International students face many of the same problems that professional students do with skyrocketing fee costs. Because there are no rules to regulate how international differential fees are spent, universities have become reliant on exploiting these students to make up for provincial underfunding.

Tuition fees in Nova Scotia are more than double those of our Atlantic neighbour

TUITION FEES SINCE 1995 VS. INFLATION



Newfoundland and Labrador, which has led to an increase of over 1000 per cent in the number of students leaving Nova Scotia to study in that province. Of course, outmigration is only one of the problems associated with high tuition fees and the resulting high-levels

of student-debt. High levels of student-debt are a drag on economic growth as indebted graduates have less available funds with which to begin their lives. Coupled with the fact that recent graduates face incredibly tight labour markets upon graduation, it is against the

best interest of our province to saddle our university and college students with debt. At a time where the province needs to encourage our graduates to buy a home, start a family, and pursue entrepreneurship, high student debt discourages all these things.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Reduce tuition fees to 2011 levels - \$36 million
- Freeze ancillary, auxiliary, professional and international student fees – no cost
- Convert student loans to grants - \$12 million



FUNDING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

FUNDING

While universities provide significant economic benefits to Nova Scotia, over the past two decades, severe cuts to public funding for universities and colleges have shifted the burden of paying for education away from governments and onto individual students and their families through a flat tax: tuition fees.

This shift has taken place despite Nova Scotia's improving financial situation. Nova's debt-to-GDP ratio, the best way to measure the province's ability to manage debt, has fallen from 48.7 per cent in 2000 to 36.7 per cent in 2014. Moreover, the cost of the province's debt has contracted significantly, with debt servicing charges accounting for only 8.7

per cent of total provincial expenditure in 2013, down from 20 per cent in 2002. Nova Scotia should take advantage of its current financial situation to invest in programs that will guarantee future prosperity.

“Speaking in purely financial terms, the province earns its investment in post-secondary education back.”

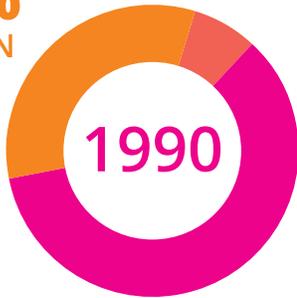
Justifications for funding cuts consistently undervalue the societal benefits of increasing the number of individuals pursuing a post-secondary education. Citizens who attain at least some post-secondary

education are more likely to be civically engaged, will be more aware of sustainable practices, less dependent on the public healthcare system, and more efficient at finding work in the labour force.

Speaking in purely financial terms, the province earns its investment in post-secondary education back. In a report released by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives in 2013, it was observed that Nova Scotia's income tax gain from a post-secondary degree holder offset public costs in 12.6 years. An economic impact study conducted by the Association of Atlantic Universities in 2010 found that the post-secondary education system in Nova Scotia had a major impact on the

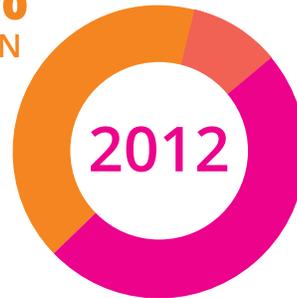
SHIFT IN FUNDING BETWEEN 1990 AND 2012

33%
TUITION
FEES



60%
PUBLIC
FUNDING

41%
TUITION
FEES



49%
PUBLIC
FUNDING

provincial GDP and employment levels. The report found that universities contribute \$1.12 billion to Nova Scotia's economy. The provincial and federal governments collect

\$220 million in income tax revenues from those employed by universities. Universities account for over 18, 500 jobs, which includes people directly employed by the university

and indirect jobs. It is estimated that for each job created by the university, another job is created somewhere else in the economy.

ACCOUNTABILITY

While it is essential for the purposes of academic freedom that universities retain independence from government interference, they are public institutions and must provide evidence that they are well managed. Students were pleased to hear that the

Government of Nova Scotia is introducing standardised public financial reporting at universities in the province. Now the government must ensure it follows through on this commitment, and releases the full figures to the public at regular annual intervals.

While the government has been hesitant to hold senior university administrators to account, they have been more than happy to trample on the academic independence of post-secondary institutions in Nova Scotia. Last April, the government introduced

the Universities Accountability and Sustainability Act. This legislation grants the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education sweeping powers to withhold public funding, restructure institutions, and suppress the labour rights of faculty and staff at universities in Nova Scotia. While the government has promised not to abuse the powers it granted itself in this legislation, a good law would have been designed to prevent the abuse from being possible in the first place. This law should be repealed, and actual accountability leg-

islation drafted in close consultation with stakeholders.

Any meaningful effort to improve accountability in the post-secondary education system will move beyond dealing with symptoms, and move directly to challenge the root of the issue. Senior university administrators work in unparalleled spaces of unaccountability. Internal university governance bodies are filled with individuals appointed or hired by senior administrators, and consistently fail to challenge internal mismanagement. The government can combat the

culture of unaccountability by introducing legislation ensuring all that all university board of governance meetings are open to the public, as at some institutions they already are. The government can strengthen internal accountability structures by amending the university acts to increase representation of elected student, faculty and staff reps at university boards of governance. Such legislation should be drafted in close consultation with stakeholders such as faculty, student and staff unions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Restore the university operating grant to 2011 levels - \$30 million
- Make university financial reporting available to the public
- Repeal the Universities Accountability and Transparency Act
- Review provincial legislation to increase student, faculty and staff representation at university governance body
- Review provincial legislation to standardise public access to university board meetings



FAIRNESS FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

In recent years, universities and colleges have strategized to attract more international students to Nova Scotia. The push to attract more international students reflects the need to build an educated, prosperous and skilled society. Between 2011 and 2016, immigration is estimated to account for 100 per cent of the net labour force growth in the country.

International students are an integral part of college and university campuses in Nova Scotia. In 2013, international student enrolments grew by 10 per cent from the year before, and have increased over 240 per cent since 2003. International students make our institutions more diverse and make valuable contributions to the academic community. They

play a significant role in the provincial economy through paying tuition fees, spending on basic living expenses, and consumer spending; an investment of approximately \$231 million per year.

“We need only look to other provinces for models of international student integration into public health insurance.”

Despite these significant contributions, international students are faced with various challenges when it comes to accessing to post-secondary education, one of which is being able to access public

health care upon arrival in Nova Scotia. At this time, international students are eligible for Medical Services Insurance (MSI) coverage once they have studied in Nova Scotia for 13 months, without spending 31 consecutive days outside the province. In the meantime, they are forced to invest in private health coverage through their institution or students' union. This policy can prove to be expensive for students who are already struggling to pay international student fees, and can prevent students from visiting their families for fear of losing health coverage.

We need only look to other provinces for models of international student integration into public health insurance that we can emulate or adapt

to Nova Scotia. Both the British Columbia Medical Services Plan and Manitoba Health do not charge any premiums for international students to be part of their provincial health plan but do require a six-month waiting period and health cards are issued for the

duration of an international student's studies in Canada.

The cost of administering health coverage to international students upon arrival is less than \$500,000 a year, a small price to pay for supporting such an important and growing population. In order for

international students to continue to live and invest in Nova Scotia after they've completed their studies, Nova Scotia must provide a supportive, welcoming environment.

RECOMMENDATION

- Cover international students under medical services insurance upon their arrival in Nova Scotia - \$500,000

A NATIONAL VISION FOR POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

While the provincial government can afford the recommendations contained within this document, students' vision of a universally accessible model of post-secondary education will require cooperation at both the provincial and fed-

eral level. The Government of Nova Scotia should lobby the federal government to create dedicated federal transfers for post-secondary education in Canada, a national Post-Secondary Education Act, and a full restoration of funding to

the post-secondary student support program. The long-term goal of the Post-Secondary Education act should be the elimination of tuition fees in Canada.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION ACT

Post-secondary education is a provincial responsibility, but since the 1940's, the federal government has played a major role in providing funding to the provincial governments, running the national student loans and grants program, and granting the majority of research funding. The quality and accessibility of post-secondary education across Canada is in

part determined by the role the federal government decides to play.

Since the cuts to federal transfer payments in the 1990s, the quality of post-secondary education has declined. Cash transfer payments for post-secondary education are roughly \$1.3 billion short of 1992 levels when accounting for inflation and population growth. Addi-

tionally, similar to the health care system, university and college-related costs increase at a much higher rate than the standard consumer price index. Over the previous eighteen years there has been, on average, an annual post-secondary education-related inflation of three per cent, per year, or about \$1.7 billion over that period. When compared to current

TUITION FEES ACROSS CANADA



federal funding levels, there is a funding gap of approximately \$2.3 billion.

One need only look at the disparity of tuition fee levels across Canada to realize that a lack of Federal engagement on this issue has put our province at a major disadvantage. Even

with provincial bursary programs, students in Nova Scotia pay fees more than twice those of students in Newfoundland and Labrador, and graduate with amongst the highest debt loads in Canada. As a province that attracts roughly half of its post-secondary student body

from outside of Nova Scotia, redirecting and increasing transfers would bring millions of additional dollars into our province. The creation of a post-secondary education act is an opportunity Nova Scotia cannot afford to miss.

POST-SECONDARY STUDENT SUPPORT PROGRAM

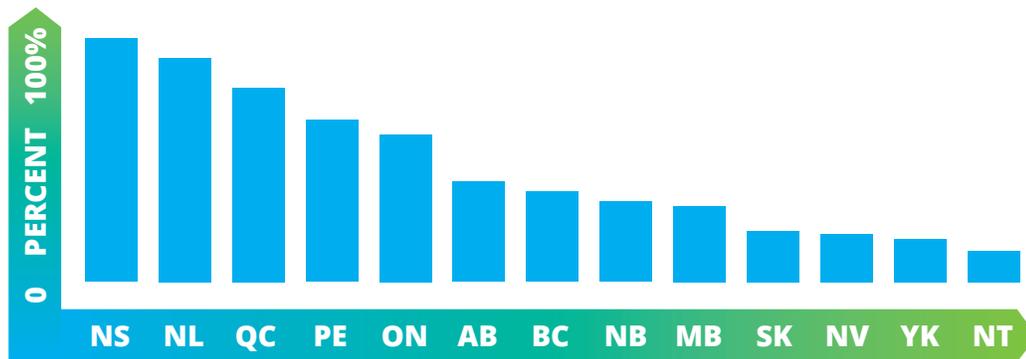
Aboriginal people represent Canada’s fast growing demographic, with the Aboriginal population growing at six times the rate of the non-Aboriginal population. Aboriginal people are consistently less educated than other Canadian demographics, even though funding through the Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP) should ensure access to college and university. The 2% funding cap on the PSSSP prevents Aboriginal students in Nova Scotia from accessing public funding for post-secondary education. Students have consistently lobbied the federal government

to remove the prohibitive cap on funding increases to the PSSSP, but unfortunately Aboriginal students in Canada are still missing the funding that is their treaty right.

Providing adequate funding for the PSSSP fulfills Canada’s moral and treaty-mandated obligations, and would lead to direct economic benefits for Canada. The Centre for the Study of Living Standards found that closing the educational gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians would lead to an additional \$179 billion in direct GDP growth and over \$400 billion in total growth over the next 20 years.

Between the years of 2001 and 2011, the Aboriginal population in Nova Scotia doubled. Nova Scotia is home to the fastest growing Aboriginal population in Canada, and must take responsibility for this ever-developing community. The recently elected federal government has committed to lifting the cap, but not to restoring lost funding. They can be pushed to do better. By joining students in lobbying the federal government to remove the cap on the PSSSP, Nova Scotia will be setting an example for the rest of the country in promoting a more equitable future for all Canadians.

ABORIGINAL POPULATION GROWTH BY PROVINCE BETWEEN 2001 AND 2011



SUMMARY OF COSTING

- **Develop and resource education, training and support services at our institutions**
- **Bring forward legislation to mandate all post-secondary institutions have stand-alone sexual assault policies that are developed – and renewed every 4 years – through a student driven process**
- **Create a Sexual Assault Support division within the Government of Nova Scotia and establish a long-term Sexual Assault Support Resource Fund available to students, campus groups, universities and Nova Scotia Community College**
- **Require universities and colleges to report publicly on incidences of sexual violence, as well as initiatives underway to address sexual violence and harassment and their effectiveness**
- **Reduce tuition fees : \$36 MILLION**
- **Freeze ancillary, auxiliary, professional and international student fees**
- **Convert student loans to grants: \$12 MILLION**
- **Restore the university operating grant to 2011 levels: \$30 MILLION**
- **Make university financial reporting available to the public**
- **Repeal the Universities Accountability and Transparency Act**
- **Review provincial legislation to increase student, faculty and staff representation at university governance body**
- **Review provincial legislation to make university board meetings open to the public**
- **Provide Medical Services Insurance coverage to international students upon their arrival in Nova Scotia: \$500,000**
- **Total: \$78.5 million**

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