

# NOVA SCOTIA'S TUITION FEE FREE-FOR-ALL

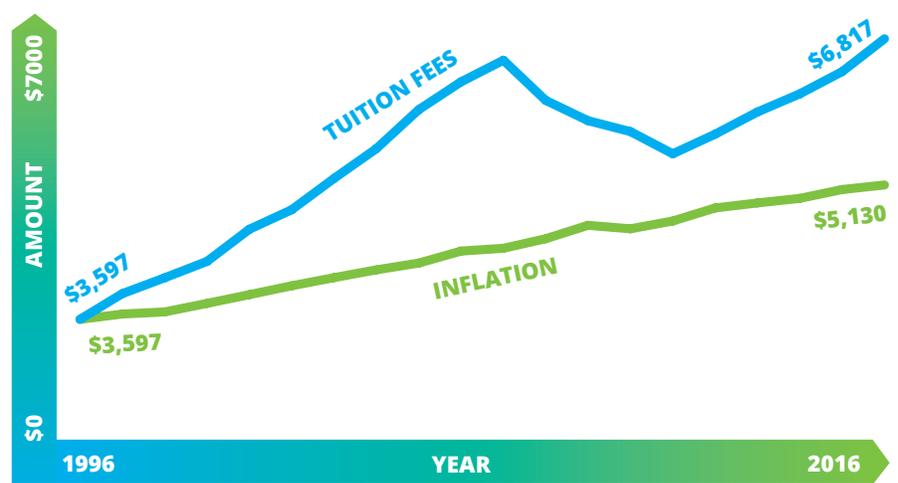
In the 2015-2016 provincial budget, the McNeil government lifted the three per cent cap on annual tuition increases for universities in Nova Scotia. This tuition fee reset allows university administrations to hike students' fees by an unlimited amount for an undefined period of time. The budget also indefinitely deregulates tuition fees for out-of-province and graduate students, meaning post-secondary institutions can increase these fees as high as they wish without government intervention. All across Nova Scotia, students are being threatened by massive tuition fee hikes as a result of the government's decision to reset tuition fees. According to the government, the initial intention of this reset policy was to provide an opportunity for post-secondary institutions with lower fees to 'catch up' to the provincial tuition fee average. However, every single framework that has been announced so far exceeds this amount. Since the government removed the annual cap on tuition fee increases earlier this year, students at the University of King's College have been threatened with a \$1,600 tuition fee increase over the next 3

years, and St. Mary's students will see an increase of up to \$2,200. NSCAD University is going from having the lowest tuition fees in Nova Scotia to the highest, exceeding the projected fee average by \$1,300. Statistics Canada's annual university tuition fee report reveals tuition fees in Nova Scotia are increasing faster than in any other province. This tuition fee reset is a failed public policy experiment that is putting post-secondary education further out of reach for students and families.

High levels of student debt are an impediment to Nova Scotia's economic growth. Relying on debt to finance education means that the full impact of high tuition fees is delayed until after graduation,

as indebted graduates have less available funds with which to begin their lives. At a time when the province needs to encourage our graduates to buy a home, start a family, and pursue entrepreneurship, high student debt discourages all of these things. Student debt also impacts career choices, even among professional faculties such as medicine and law. The high upfront cost to obtain a post-secondary education is a barrier that can prevent those in need of financial assistance from being able to fully participate in the economy for upwards of 10 years post-graduation. All of these factors depress the economic contribution by graduates and lead to a stagnant economy.

## TUITION FEES SINCE 1996 VS. INFLATION



It is critical that the government of Nova Scotia affirms that education is a right for everyone, and allows all people to pursue post-secondary education no matter the financial situation they have been born into. Of the 70 percent of high school graduates who cite financial reasons as the main factor for not pursuing post-secondary education, one in four cited accumulation of debt as the main deterrent. Those from marginalised communities, low-income backgrounds, and single parents are more likely to be strongly averse to accumulating student debt. Studies show that youth aged 18-24 with parents earning more than \$100,000 in pre-tax income are almost twice as likely (49%) to enroll in university than those earning less than 25,000 (28%). In order to create opportunities for college and university graduates to thrive in our rapidly changing economy, we must invest in those seeking higher education, not indebt them.

There is a better path for post-secondary education in Nova Scotia and it's not too late for our government to work alongside students in the pursuit of accessible education. The government of Nova Scotia must adequately fund public post-secondary education rather than continue to make up funding shortfalls on the backs of students with endless tuition hikes.

# OUR DEMANDS

- ▶ **An immediate reduction of tuition fees to 2011 levels, where they had been frozen since 2009!**
- ▶ **A restoration of the \$30 million cut from provincial funding to universities since 2011!**
- ▶ **The conversion of all student loans into grants!**

## NOVA SCOTIANS STAND WITH STUDENTS IN REJECTING THE TUITION FEE RESET



of Nova Scotians oppose tuition fee deregulation



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



of Nova Scotians **disagree** that any fees should be permitted to increase (even to match cost increases at the university)



of Nova Scotians **are concerned** that high student debt loads force graduates to leave the province for higher paying work elsewhere



of Nova Scotians **support** reducing tuition fees



of Nova Scotians **would pay more** in taxes to see government funding for universities increase