

Provincial Budget 2022 Consultations: Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services Report

An Analysis

by

Confederation of University Faculty Associations of BC (CUFA BC)

November 2021

ABOUT CUFA BC

Celebrating fifty years of leadership and engagement, CUFA BC represents more than 5,500 faculty members, including professors, academic librarians, lecturers, instructors, and sessionals at five research and doctoral universities in BC: University of British Columbia, Simon Fraser University, University of Victoria, University of Northern British Columbia, and Royal Roads University.

Our mandate is to act as the unified voice of our members on a variety of issues affecting post-secondary education in BC. We promote the value of high-quality post-secondary education; academic freedom; university governance; academic labour relations; and research and teaching to the provincial government and wider public. We produce timely research on a variety of subjects, including university governance, government policies, trends in funding and developments at research universities, and policy analyses.

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Budget 2022 Consultations: Analysis of Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services Report

The Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services (the “Committee”) submitted its report to the legislative assembly on November 15, 2021 following their provincial Budget 2022 Consultation.¹ The full report comprises 119 pages and is organized into sections each addressing one of British Columbia’s public sectors. For the purpose of this analysis, CUFA BC will focus on the advanced education section, which has been enclosed in Appendix A.

Background

Each year, the Committee opens itself to the public as part of a consultation process to inform the upcoming provincial budget. This Committee comprises members of the legislative assembly from across the political spectrum and is itself non-partisan.² Information about the Committee, including members and terms of reference are included in Appendix A. The Minister of Finance provides an initial consultation paper directing their work.³ This year, Government identified its priorities as putting people first; lasting and meaningful reconciliation; equity and anti-racism; a better future through addressing climate change; and a strong, sustainable economy that works for everyone.

Consultation Process

The consultation process took place between June 30 and September 30 and involved a public survey, presentations from community members and organizations, as well as options for submitting recommendations in writing and audio-visual formats. During the consultation period, the Committee heard 347 presentations and received 710 submissions and 1,417 responses to an online survey. Presentations were primarily virtual with limited opportunity to present in-person. All presentations were livestreamed.⁴ As with last year’s process, which saw an overhaul to the consultation process as a result of pandemic disruptions, prospective presenters submitted a request to present and, upon approval, organizers arranged presenters into groups with similar interests and assigned meeting dates/times. Consultations from post-secondary interest groups were organized virtually on August 31. In our assigned schedule, CUFA BC President Dan Laitsch presented alongside representatives from FPSE and RUCBC. CUFA BC also provided a formal written submission (Appendix B). Summaries of presentations and questions from CUFA BC allied organizations and member institutions are available in Appendix C.

¹ The report can be found here https://www.leg.bc.ca/content/CommitteeDocuments/42nd-parliament/2nd-session/fgs/budget-consultation/42-2-2_FGS-Report_Budget-2022-Consultation.pdf

² <https://www.leg.bc.ca/parliamentary-business/committees/42ndparliament-2ndsession-fgs/members>

³ 2021 Consultation Paper: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/british-columbians-our-governments/government-finances/bc-budget/2022-budget-consultation.pdf>

⁴ Hansards from the public presentation can be found <https://www.leg.bc.ca/documents-data/committees-transcripts/20210831am-Finance-Victoria-Blues>

CUFA BC Recommendations

Our recommendations for the budget consultation focused on several themes, including **recovery** and **stability, innovation, truth and reconciliation**, and **inclusiveness** at BC's research universities in 2022. CUFA BC argued that public universities have been instrumental to the Government of British Columbia's priorities in putting people first; lasting and meaningful reconciliation; addressing equity and racism; creating a better future through addressing climate change; and contributing to a strong, sustainable economy that works for everyone. BC's public universities have long been recognized as vital to ensuring the social and economic well-being of the province and British Columbians. Our members provide a crucial level of support to Government and the public, driving the recovery, innovation, and transformation of our society. Our submission invited Government to affirm and reinvest in public education. We offered a pathway to an economic and public policy environment that will build a strong, educated future for British Columbians.

CUFA BC made six recommendations organized around three topics:

I. Putting People First at Post-Secondary Institutions

1. **Strategic Investment:** Government has the opportunity to strategically invest in universities at a time when they will best contribute to the economy and society. Commit to sector stability by restructuring the funding model, assert the primacy of public funding to universities and reduce overreliance on precarious employment and international student tuition.
2. **Stability:** Create a stabilization fund to support institutional **recovery** from pandemic disruptions:
 - a. support the human infrastructure of post-secondary institutions, such as the recovery and expansion of faculty personnel to support enrolment demands driven by workforce changes resulting from the pandemic.
 - b. support better health plans and comprehensive mental health initiatives for all campus community members, including faculty.
 - c. address institutions' risk exposure caused by expanded reliance on international student tuition by freezing international student tuition, implementing seat caps, and providing funding to offset the loss of income until the system stabilizes.

II. Supporting Research

3. **Provincial Research Transition Grant:** Create a broad-based provincial research grant open to all disciplines, STEM and non-STEM, to support researchers negatively impacted by Covid-19. Jumpstarting research programmes is necessary. It requires a targeted infusion of resources to support research until grant monies return to normal, personnel are re-hired and trained, labs are reopened and restored, and research collaborations can be rejuvenated.
4. **Offset Currency Exchange:** Provide institutions with supports for essential US-based resources and supplies affected by fluctuating currency exchange rates, such as online textbooks, journals, software, and other licenses, as well as lab supplies and reagents for research and teaching needs.

III. Supporting Truth and Reconciliation, Equity, and Inclusiveness

5. **Internet Access As Essential Service:** Through the lenses of **Truth and Reconciliation** and equity and **inclusion**, invest in province-wide internet access, connectivity, and infrastructure. Based on what Covid-19 has demonstrated, the need to connect online is an essential service, especially for those living in rural and remote communities. We must ensure Indigenous communities, as well as all rural and remote communities, have access to affordable and reliable high-speed internet.
6. **Truth and Reconciliation:** Implement the Calls to Action for the post-secondary education made by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It is an ethical imperative that Government provide ongoing funding to support BC universities and colleges in creating degree and diploma programs in Aboriginal languages (**Call to Action #16**), to hire Indigenous faculty into permanent positions, and to finance research programmes aimed at dismantling systems of racism, discriminations, the criminalization of poverty, and state-sanctioned brutality. Further, work with the federal government and your provincial colleagues to implement the following:
 - a. **Call to Action #11:** We call upon the federal government to provide adequate funding to end the backlog of First Nations students seeking a post-secondary education.
 - b. **Call to Action #62(ii):** We call upon the federal, provincial, and territorial governments, in consultation and collaboration with Survivors, Aboriginal peoples, and educators, to provide the necessary funding to post-secondary institutions to educate teachers on how to integrate Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods into classrooms.
 - c. **Call to Action #63:** We call upon the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada to maintain an annual commitment to Aboriginal education issues, including developing learning resources on Aboriginal peoples in Canadian history, and the history and legacy of residential schools.
 - d. **Call to Action #65:** We call upon the federal government, through the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, and in collaboration with Aboriginal peoples, post-secondary institutions and educators, and the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation and its partner institutions, to establish a national research program with multi-year funding to advance understanding of reconciliation.

CUFA BC's Take-Away: Faculty and Research Left Behind

Faculty and research interests are minimally represented in the Committee's final recommendations, though we had some success in having our voice heard in the Committee's summary of our presentation. There exists a disconnect between what was recommended by every stakeholder and what the Committee ultimately recommends to Government. The Committee did well to summarize the recommendations from all the presenters only to minimize the underlying tenor of desperation calling for significant investment in advanced education. The Committee's recommendations specifically fall short of supporting faculty teaching, research, and working conditions at BC's research universities. Where there is mention of research and innovation, it is to support graduate and undergraduate student research to "support communities and spur economic and social recovery."

In its recommendations, the Committee focused on

“the important role of the sector in addressing labour shortages as well as operational pressures and programming demands placed on institutions. [Committee] Members recommend an examination of the funding model to address these areas, including ensuring accountability and transparency for funding. Support for Indigenous students and international students are other areas of interest for the Committee, along with funding to address sexualized and gender-based violence and mental health on campus. Members also highlight affordability barriers with respect to housing and post-secondary fees, and recommend additional investments in infrastructure along with improving transparency on fees. They also recommend investments in adult education and literacy, technology, trades, and skills training, as well as research and innovation.” [page 7]

Highlighting Our Successes

The Committee acknowledged many of CUFA BC’s recommendations in its summary and even incorporated a few of our recommendations into the final recommendations to Government. Most notably, the Committee advanced our recommendations with respect to the five calls to action related to post-secondary education from the Truth and Reconciliation Report (Committee recommendation #9 Indigenous Students, page 21). The Committee recommended that Government examine the funding model to ensure investments support operational and programming demands and institutional financial flexibility (Committee recommendation #11 Indigenous Students, page 22).

In other positive news, where the committee did not adopt our recommendations, they acknowledged our input in summary:

- “The Confederation of University Faculty Associations of British Columbia recommended a stabilization fund to support institutional recovery from pandemic disruption.” (page 16)
- “The Confederation of University Faculty Associations of British Columbia highlighted the work of faculty in supporting institutions and students during the pandemic and recommended reinvesting in human infrastructure and expanding faculty personnel to support enrolment demands drive by workforce changes resulting from the pandemic.” (page 17)
- “The Confederation of University Faculty Associations of British Columbia referenced several additional Calls to Action and recommended ongoing funding to support the hiring of Indigenous faculty into permanent positions and fund research programs aimed at dismantling systems of racism, discrimination, and poverty.” (page 18)
- “The Confederation of University Faculty Associations of British Columbia described the negative impact of the pandemic on some research programs due to inaccessible labs on closed campuses and the inability to conduct in-person and community-based research.” (page 18)
- “The Confederation of University Faculty Associations of British Columbia references several additional Calls to Action and recommended ongoing funding to support the hiring of Indigenous faculty into permanent positions and fund research programs aimed at dismantling systems of racism, discrimination, and poverty.” (page 18)

The Committee made several comments that reflect CUFA BC’s recommendations and which aligned with comments made from several stakeholders:

- “With respect to Indigenous students, post-secondary institutions and organizations advocated for mechanisms to improve access, inclusion, and supports.” (page 15)
- “Organizations and post-secondary institutions highlighted the importance of affordable, high-speed internet for accessing post-secondary education.” (page 16)
- “Several organizations advocated for increases to operational funding for post-secondary education.” (page 16)
- “In advocating for these operational funding increases, some organizations referenced the impact of the pandemic and the need to reduce reliance on international student tuition.” (page 16)
- “There were also recommendations with respect to the need for financial flexibility in running a deficit or accessing reserve funds.” (page 17)
- “Faculty associations remarked on the growth of precarious work in advanced education.” (page 17)
- “The Committee also received multiple recommendations to freeze or reduce tuition fees.” (page 20)
- “[The Committee] also acknowledged that many teachers in this sector [adult education and literacy] are retired or retiring and that there is a need for funding to support stable employment.” (page 21)

Of sixteen recommendations made for the advanced education sector, the final report made the following recommendations, which reflect those made in our submission:

Indigenous Students

Recommendation 9: Provide additional supports for Indigenous learners, including Elder programs and similar initiatives that provide connection to culture and community, Indigenous counsellors and advisors, and mechanisms to ensure improved access and affordability.

Operational Funding

Recommendation 11: Recognize the value and importance of post-secondary education by examining the funding model to ensure investments position BC to meet the needs of the future workforce, address operational pressures and programming demands, and include consideration for short-term financial flexibility with clearly defined accountabilities and transparency to support recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Looking to Others

In looking at what other groups in our sector presented, there was a great deal of commonality in our recommendations this year, more than in previous ones. There was rich insight into the experiences of post-secondary from the perspectives of labour, employer, and student groups, who highlighted the need for recognition of the following:

- increased, sustainable funding, including operating grants that keep pace with inflation (CUPE BC even advocated for increasing funding to 75% of base budgets!);

- financial flexibility in running a deficit or accessing reserve funds to create equitable working conditions for faculty, improve learning conditions for students, and meet programming needs;
- additional classroom and research space;
- reviewing the funding in the sector to remedy regional inequities and to expand faculty personnel (including hiring Indigenous faculty)
- minimizing high rates of sessional instructors (who are often precariously employed and are disproportionately members of equity-seeking groups) as a result of block funding limitations and secondary scales;
- funding for capital projects and deferred maintenance rather than focusing solely on new builds;
- mechanisms to improve access, inclusion, and supports for Indigenous students, including offering programs in Indigenous languages;
- affordability and access for students, including housing support;
- policy changes to reduce the financial exploitation of international students;
- expansion of the BC Access Grant for undergrads and graduate scholarships, needs-based grants, and a grant tax to offset programs.
- the need to freeze or reduce tuition, including for closing the gap in renamed and slightly adjusted programs and other strategies institutions use to get around the Tuition Fee Limit Policy;
- the importance of affordable, high-speed internet for accessing post-secondary education;
- access to co-op programs, work-integrated learning opportunities, and micro-credentialing; and
- supports to ameliorate ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on students and institutions.

Although advanced education is entirely separate from K-12 Education, there were recommendations made for that group that would apply to post-secondary. The Committee recommended addressing recruitment and retention in K-12 Education (Recommendation #111) to “Explore creative measures to recruit and retain teachers, including providing incentives, providing relief to teachers in school districts with high housing costs, addressing work-life balance challenges, and reducing barriers for immigrants and internationally educated teachers.” In fact, all faculty need supports to address unsustainable work-life balance challenges. As well, contract faculty and tenure-track faculty alike (and many others) would benefit from relief for high housing costs.

In looking at the discussions and questions from the Committee (Appendix C) during the advanced education presentations, there was disproportionate focus on a political narrative that international student enrolments have displaced domestic enrolments. Presenters and Committee members discussed the trends of increased reliance on international students and concomitant tuition revenue and suggested that domestic enrolments have declined as a result of institutional priorities. This argument is a false narrative that obfuscates demographic trends in Canada and insufficient funding allocations from provincial and national governments.⁵ It was the decrease in domestic student enrolments brought on by a demographic bust starting in 2012 that then permitted larger international student numbers. Domestic students are not being turned away from post-secondary institutions in favour of international students.

⁵ See Statistics Canada enrolment report <https://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p2SV.pl?Function=getSurvey&SDDS=5017> and Higher Education Strategy Associate’s analysis <https://higheredstrategy.com/statscan-enrolment-day-2021/>

Domestic students are not being turned away from post-secondary institutions in favour of international students. It is the case, however, that international students are increasingly relied upon by institutions as a revenue stream that offsets funding shortfalls from government.

As with previous years, much of the focus for all advanced education the presentations centred on student issues regardless of if it were an organization representing students, faculty associations, university administrators, or allied advocacy groups. Student issues continue to be the singular, truncated lens through which our sector advances issues about faculty, funding, research, and even articulating the diversity of needs for colleges, polytechnics, and teaching, research, and doctoral universities.

As unique and deserving of advocacy as they are, students remain the default audience for advanced education. Reorienting our own interests through the lens of student interests is a necessary strategy for lobbying Government, but it limits us. It feeds the narrative that faculty interests are valid only in relation—and secondarily—to those of students. CUFA BC affirms its goal to establish itself as a legitimate audience without needing to piggyback off the backs of student interests.

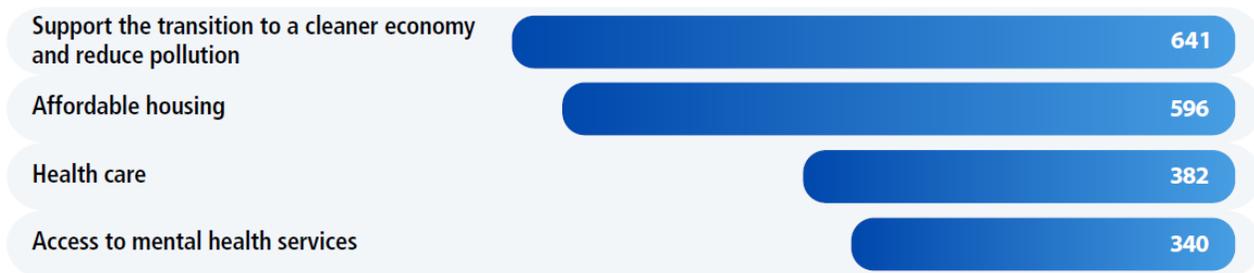
Public Support for Advanced Education

Advanced education is incredibly valuable to the province through its indirect role in building an educated and skilled society. It is not, however, a rallying cry at the forefront of public opinion. When asked what priorities would help make life in BC better, top choices were supporting the transition to a cleaner economy and reduce pollution; affordable housing; health care; and access to mental health services (Fig. 1). Compared with last year’s survey, K-12 and Advanced Education, which were merged into one category, ranked number six on the provincial priority list. This year, it didn’t make it onto the list.

Figure 1. Survey Question 1

QUESTION 1

The BC government is committed to making life more affordable, delivering the services people count on and building a resilient, sustainable economy. Please select three priorities to help make life better for you, your family and your community as we move through recovery. (1,414 Responses)

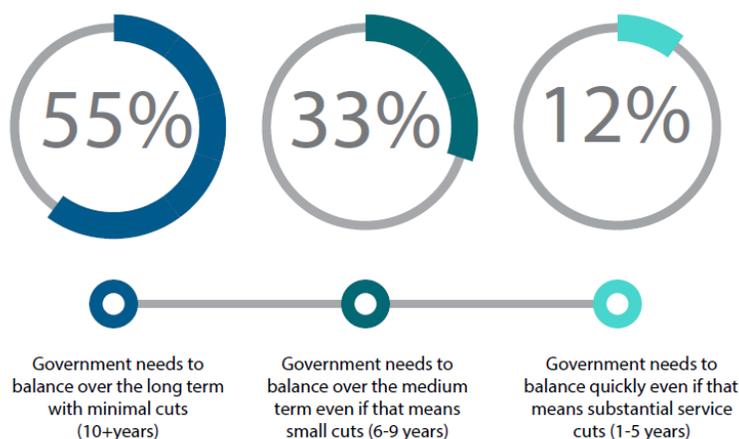


When asked how quickly British Columbians wanted Government to tackle the deficit (largely driven by measures to support people through the pandemic), a majority of respondents recommended against cuts to public services, preferring a long-term repayment strategy (Fig. 2).

Figure 2. Survey Question 2

QUESTION 2

Part of BC's economic recovery includes a sustainable path back to a balanced provincial budget. Early projections of a return to balance are seven to nine years, and a more detailed timeline will be outlined in Budget 2022. Which statement below best matches your views about returning to balance? (1,399 Responses)



Government's understanding of advanced education is informed by public opinion. Excluding advanced education from survey questions, like this year's survey, or even truncating K-12 and advanced education into one category like last year's survey, means that Government doesn't have a nuanced understanding of our sector. Government relies on these survey responses to inform public policy decisions even if the reality is that very few British Columbians participate. All of this is to say that while advanced education has had public support in previous years, we don't know how British Columbians value advanced education this year. For the 2022 provincial budget, the majority of respondents indicated they support Government's priority to maintain services even if it means carrying a deficit for a decade or more.

A Snapshot of Today's Provincial Economy

On November 22, Finance Minister Selina Robinson released the second quarterly financial report which shows strong economic recovery.⁶ The province's deficit is forecasted at \$1.7 billion, down from an original forecast of \$9.7 billion in the April 2021 provincial budget and \$4.8 billion reported in the first fiscal quarter. Robinson attributed this financial improvement to higher revenues and stronger consumer spending and taxation revenue.

The province's economic growth prospects for this year have dimmed since the spring, sliding from six per cent projected GDP growth in August to 5.5 per cent this month. Next year, BC GDP growth is projected at 4.2 per cent. The reduction is attributed to forecasts in the private sector, the softer than expected economic growth across Canada and abroad, the pandemic's persistence, plus supply chain disruptions and rising inflation.

⁶ <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/british-columbians-our-governments/government-finances/quarterly-reports/2021-22-q2-report.pdf>

The Conference Board of Canada's provincial outlook predicts that the Canadian economy will finish the year with 5.1 per cent gain in real GDP.⁷ The Board forecasts growth of 4.4 per cent nationally for 2022 but predicts weak economic fundamental will slow growth in 2023. The Conference Board predicts BC's GDP will grow by 4.6 per cent in 2022. We have benefitted from a fast rebound in employment this year, with job growth expected to continue through 2023. However, the labour market is struggling as demand for services is rising, and the hospitality and tourism industries grapple with gaps in the workforce. BC's natural resource industries are also lagging with the drop in lumber prices and the closure of salmon fisheries taking a toll on employment numbers. Professional services and retail are expected to cushion the province's economy, though, as evidenced in the significantly reduced budget deficit.

As the economy reopens provincial and federal governments are expected to shift from short-term stimulus to long-term planning. These trends also suggest a shift in focus from jobs with lower education jobs to those requiring advanced education—an important issue for Government and institutions of higher education to anticipate.

Budgeting to Bargain

The economic forecasting suggests on one hand that the economy is rebounding and we are in a better financial situation than anyone anticipated. On the other hand, the narrative that the rate of growth will not maintain in the future is a tacit strategy to manage expectations going into public sector bargaining.

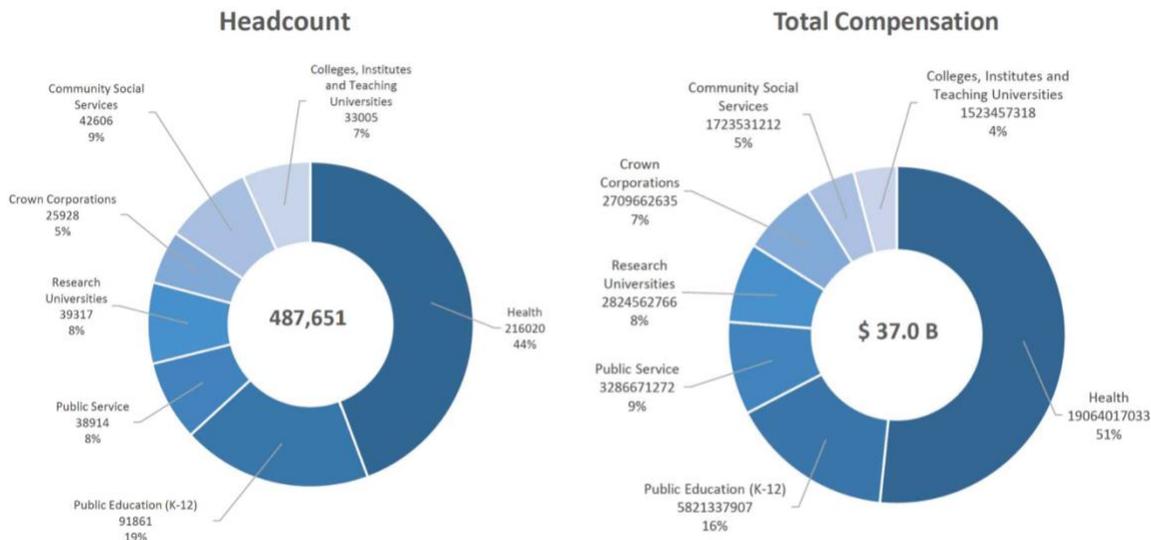
All budgets being equal, this year will be a Big Budget Year for the province. Budget 2022 will see us through the public sector mandate for all 487,651 employees in the public sector (Fig. 3).⁸ This number includes 39,317 (8 per cent of total) public employees at BC's research universities. Government reports spending \$37 billion in total compensation in the public sector, \$2.8 billion (8 per cent of total) of which is spent at the research universities.

Early reports on a severely underfunded compensation mandate from the Public Sector Employers' Council (PSEC) have shifted to less regressive projections. Anything less than inflation, however, will translate to a loss in purchasing power. Annual inflation over the past several years has been much higher than the 2 per cent general wage increases over the life of the 2019 Sustainable Services Negotiating Mandate. It is unlikely the Government will acquiesce to labour demands for compensation that, at a minimum, keeps pace with inflation. This does not mean post-secondary has to accept the public sector mandate. There is growing pressure from within labour organizations not to accept Government mandates that continue to reap profits off the backs of public sector workers and at a time when massive bailouts have been given to private industry. Post-secondary labour groups may wish to try and access nongovernmental funding (from tuition and fundraising, for example) as a way of challenging the provincial mandate.

⁷ <https://www.conferenceboard.ca/e-library/abstract.aspx?did=11357>

⁸ <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/british-columbians-our-governments/services-policies-for-government/public-sector-management/psec/2019-bargaining-update.pdf>

Figure 3. Public Sector Employee Headcount and Compensation for 2021



Source: PSEC Bargaining Update (August 2021)

Public sector bargaining wasn't mentioned in the consultations, either by government or any of the presenters. But it could be read into every presentation as we look to recover lost potential. The single greatest issue immediately affecting post-secondary education has been disruptions caused by the pandemic. Issues stemming from understaffing, increased workload, enrolment demands, novel teaching modalities, and all the rest. These disruptions are themselves complex and will require creative remedies. Most importantly, these disruptions are ongoing with no resolution in sight.

This interest in recovering lost potential is not exclusive to advanced education either, which has been affected to a lesser degree than, say, the health and tourism industries. Budget 2022 will have to reconcile the profound disruption of every aspect of our society with the ever-increasing humanitarian crises of British Columbia's homelessness, poverty, climate emergency, and health and mental health recovery. It will be no small feat to satisfy the competing needs of so many in our province.

Anticipating Government Priorities

The Committee report on advanced education focused on recurring themes that telegraph some of Government's potential priorities for budget 2022. Specifically, the committee emphasized the need for advanced education to support the economic and social recovery through skills training, co-ops, and micro-credentials, as well as research opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students. The Committee focused on accountability and transparency in terms of the funding model as well as tuition and ancillary fees at institutions. The Committee recommended poverty reduction initiatives in the form of grants and housing affordability and access. The Committee discussed the need for eradicating sexualized and gender-based violence on campuses and providing student mental health supports. CUFA BC expects to see funding allocated to these particular issues.

Summary

The Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services released their report to Government on November 15 following extensive consultations across the province. For the post-secondary sector the report summarizes the needs well, but generally ignores faculty, abandoning students to large classes with overwhelmed faculty. Further, the Committee missed the opportunity to drive the pandemic recovery with critically needed research supports.

The Committee made several high-level recommendations to address operational funding at post-secondary institutions, which avoided getting into the weeds of the costliest and most contentious demands from within the sector. The Committee recommended specific supports addressing student needs and minimized those of faculty and research institutions. Ultimately, the recommended guidance leaves the post-secondary sector without critically needed supports to support faculty teaching, research, and working conditions at BC's research universities.

While students remain the default audience for advanced education policy makers, the simplistic focus on student funding and housing needs at the expense of instructional capacity means that student learning will suffer over the longer term. Over the past decade, increases in enrolments at BC's research universities have not resulted in an increase in the full-time faculty complement, resulting in larger classes, increased workloads, and a strained instructional system pushed to the brink by the ongoing pandemic. Once again, faculty are asked to teach larger classes and conduct more research with fewer supports from Government and institutions. Reliance on asking faculty to maintain unsustainable workloads is devastating, as faculty face burnout, deteriorating health, and mental health outcomes related to chronic stress.

Advanced education is incredibly valuable to the province through its role in building an educated and skilled society. Investment in the human infrastructure driving high-quality teaching and research should be a top priority for this Government as it responds to the pandemic and looks to the future. Predictable, stable, and strategic investment in the human infrastructure and research programmes at BC's post-secondary institutions is critically needed but missing in the Committee's recommendations.

Select Standing Committee on Finance and
Government Services

REPORT ON THE BUDGET 2022 CONSULTATION

November 2021



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
of BRITISH COLUMBIA

Second Report
Second Session, 42nd Parliament

15 of 57

COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEE

MEMBERS

Janet Routledge, MLA, Chair
Burnaby North

Ben Stewart, MLA, Deputy Chair
Kelowna West

Pam Alexis, MLA
Abbotsford-Mission
(to September 24, 2021; from November 4, 2021)

Jagrup Brar, MLA
Surrey-Fleetwood
(from September 24, 2021 to November 4, 2021)

Lorne Doerkson, MLA
Cariboo-Chilcotin

Megan Dykeman, MLA
Langley East

Greg Kylo, MLA
Shuswap

Grace Lore, MLA
Victoria-Beacon Hill

Harwinder Sandhu, MLA
Vernon-Monashee

Mike Starchuk, MLA
Surrey-Cloverdale

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Jennifer Arril, Clerk of Committees

Karan Riarh, Senior Research Analyst

Katey Stickle, Committee Research Analyst

Jenny Byford and Jesse Gordon, Committee Researchers

Jonathon Hamilton, Committee Research Assistant (Co-op)

Mary Newell, Administrative Coordinator

Stephanie Raymond, Committees Assistant

TERMS OF REFERENCE

On April 15, 2021, the Legislative Assembly agreed that the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services be empowered to:

1. Examine, inquire into and make recommendations with respect to the budget consultation paper prepared by the Minister of Finance in accordance with section 2 of the *Budget Transparency and Accountability Act* (S.B.C. 2000, c. 23) and, in particular, to:
 - a. conduct public consultations across British Columbia on proposals and recommendations regarding the provincial budget and fiscal policy for the coming fiscal year by any means the Committee considers appropriate; and
 - b. prepare a report no later than November 15, 2021, on the results of those consultations.
2. Consider and make recommendations on the annual reports, rolling three-year service plans and budgets of the statutory officers, namely, the:
 - i. Auditor General
 - ii. Chief Electoral Officer
 - iii. Conflict of Interest Commissioner
 - iv. Human Rights Commissioner
 - v. Information and Privacy Commissioner
 - vi. Merit Commissioner
 - vii. Ombudsperson
 - viii. Police Complaint Commissioner
 - ix. Representative for Children and Youth
3. Inquire into and make recommendations with respect to other matters brought to the Committee's attention by any of the aforementioned statutory officers.

That the Committee be designated as the Committee referred to in sections 19, 20, 21 and 23 of the *Auditor General Act* (S.B.C. 2003, c. 2) and that the report in section 22 of the *Auditor General Act* (S.B.C. 2003, c. 2) be referred to the Committee.

That the Committee be designated as the Committee referred to in sections 47.02 and 47.03 of the *Human Rights Code* (R.S.B.C. 1996, c. 210).

That, in addition to the powers previously conferred upon the Select Standing Committees of the House, the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services be empowered to:

- a. appoint of its number one or more subcommittees and to refer to such subcommittees any of the matters referred to the Committee and to delegate to the subcommittees all or any of its powers except the power to report directly to the House;
- b. sit during a period in which the House is adjourned, during the recess after prorogation until the next following Session and during any sitting of the House;
- c. adjourn from place to place as may be convenient; and
- d. retain personnel as required to assist the Committee.

That the Committee report to the House as soon as possible; and that during a period of adjournment, the Committee deposit its reports with the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, and upon resumption of the sittings of the House, or in the next following Session, as the case may be, the Chair present all reports to the House.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Every year, the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services (the “Committee”) conducts a consultation on the upcoming provincial budget. Between June 30 and September 30, 2021, British Columbians were invited to share their priorities for Budget 2022. During the consultation period, the Committee heard 347 presentations and received 710 submissions and 1,417 responses to an online survey.

This report provides a comprehensive summary of the priorities and ideas shared by British Columbians during the consultation and outlines the Committee's 143 recommendations. The report begins with a discussion on equity and inclusion in recognition of how this theme applies across many of the subsequent topics and policy areas. Thereafter, themes are presented in alphabetical order; the numbering of recommendations does not indicate priority.

In reflecting on the issues facing the province and the recommendations put forward by British Columbians, the Committee observes common threads with respect to the need for better coordination, communication, and collaboration across services and providers, along with better incorporation of local and Indigenous knowledge and perspectives. Members also emphasize the value of a more proactive, forward-looking lens across policy areas as upfront investments in prevention and early intervention can save on downstream costs. They additionally recognize that reconciliation must be foundational to all budgetary and policy decisions and actions, and that systemic barriers related to gender, race, and accessibility need to be addressed across all sectors. Digital connectivity is also a critical equity issue given the immense digital shift and the Committee urges significant investments in this regard.

The Committee highlights several areas for urgent and immediate action, including addressing housing affordability and supply. Members note that housing is at a crisis point and a growing source of socioeconomic inequality which is affecting health and the economy. They highlight that no one solution will solve this crisis, and as such, recommend government

examine all policy levers to increase the affordability and supply of housing.

Committee Members also stress the critical importance of addressing the climate crisis by mobilizing all of government to implement solutions. They emphasize that BC's climate measures should be actionable, adaptable, and flexible to enable different industries, communities, and regions to do their part. The Committee also makes recommendations related to clean and renewable energy, low- and zero-emission vehicles, and energy efficiency and building standards in support of climate action.

The Committee additionally focuses on strengthening emergency management planning and readiness to ensure BC is prepared and resourced for the next emergency. Reflecting on the most recent wildfire season, and in particular the impact on the residents of Lytton, Members highlight the need to ensure plans and strategies are comprehensive and proactive, and incorporate the full continuum of prevention to recovery, as well as improved communication and coordination.

Health care was another area of priority with a particular focus on prevention, early intervention, and affordability. Members support an immediate review of the continuum of long-term care to home care services, with a focus on standards, oversight, and accountability, as well as additional investments in long-term care and assisted living spaces, home care services, and community supports. They also urge investments in mental health and addictions services and infrastructure to address the range of needs and waitlists across all age groups. As it relates to health human resources, the Committee supports initiatives to increase recruitment and retention of health professionals as well as ensure all professionals are supported in working to their full scope of practice. Members also recommend expanding community-based primary care networks with the integration of additional health disciplines to ensure British Columbians receive appropriate, timely care. Other recommendations in health relate to: hospice and palliative

care; grief and bereavement programs; pharmaceuticals; public health; research; and rural and remote health care.

With respect to K-12 education, the Committee highlights the need to re-examine capital funding to be more forward-looking and responsive as well as the need to fast-track construction of new schools and additions. Members also support a review of the operational funding formula to ensure it is proactive and transparent, and addresses identified and anticipated needs related to programming and curriculum, health and safety, and enrolment growth. The provision of supports for students with special needs and vulnerable students, including funding for meal programs and mental health supports, is another area of interest, with Members noting the link to educational outcomes and inclusion. The Committee additionally makes recommendations with respect to the recruitment and retention of teachers as well as online and distributed learning programs.

As it relates to advanced education, the Committee recognizes the important role of the sector in addressing labour shortages as well as operational pressures and programming demands placed on institutions. Members recommend an examination of the funding model to address these areas, including ensuring accountability and transparency for funding. Support for Indigenous students and international students are other areas of interest for the Committee, along with funding to address sexualized and gender-based violence and mental health on campus. Members also highlight affordability barriers with respect to housing and post-secondary fees, and recommend additional investments in infrastructure along with improving transparency on fees. They also recommend investments in adult education and literacy, and technology, trades, and skills training, as well as research and innovation.

The Committee makes several recommendations to support arts and culture in recognition of the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes: the provision of predictable, long-term funding, mechanisms to support individual artists, and investments in capital infrastructure. Members also recommend ongoing support for the digital media, music, and film industry, including implementing a labour tax credit for the broadcast sector. The Committee also supports incentives for the purchase of BC-published books as well as increased funding for public libraries, noting how libraries play an important role in promoting equity and providing access to services and information. Investments in sport are also highlighted with Members recognizing how the sector came together to put

forward a request for implementing the provincial Pathways to Sport strategy.

Economic development recommendations cover a range of industries and sectors, including agriculture, natural resources, tourism, and technology. With respect to agriculture, the Committee recognizes a need to support the industry by addressing barriers to agricultural activity, investing in infrastructure, and supporting outreach, with Members emphasizing the importance of food security. Members also recognize a need to support the coastal economy and encourage investments in aquaculture and processing. On forestry, the Committee highlights how forest management needs to reflect reconciliation, healthy forests, community, climate action, and value-added opportunities. Committee Members additionally make several recommendations to support natural resource and rural development, including increasing resources to improve permitting, monitoring, and oversight, as well as dedicated supports for strengthening and diversifying rural economies. They also support electrification and decarbonization efforts, and funding for Geoscience BC. With respect to tourism, the Committee acknowledges the significant impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the sector and the need to support recovery, as well as pursue new opportunities related to sustainability and accessibility. Members additionally recognize the shift to a knowledge and services driven economy and the need for supports to the technology, life sciences, and innovation sectors. They also highlight challenges with labour shortages and recommend targeting untapped sources of skilled workers, investing in diversity and inclusion strategies, encouraging healthy and safe workplaces, and looking to immigration.

In addition to the urgency of addressing climate change, the Committee identifies a number of other areas for investment with respect to the environment. These include: investments in conservation and protection efforts, including permanent funding for fish, wildlife, and habitat management; funding for watershed security and the modernization of dams; funding for parks, recreation, and trails; and the exploration of a comprehensive province-wide waste management program. Members especially emphasize the need for increased funding for invasive species prevention, monitoring, regulation, inspection, and mitigation, in recognition of the negative and social impact invasive species have on ecosystems, tourism, and drinking water.

Committee Members make several recommendations in the area of fiscal and regulatory policy. They highlight how the budgetary and taxation framework must enable proactive spending, ensure competitiveness, and support equity while ensuring confidence in the province's finances. The Committee also expresses support for adapting pandemic-related supports for individuals and small- and medium-sized businesses to ensure they are responsive to need and evolving conditions. Members additionally make recommendations related to: commercial property assessment categories; non-compliance in the collection and remittance of the Province Sales Tax (PST); the employer health tax; the luxury tax; and the corporate income tax. They also encourage supports to the co-operative sector, the introduction of prompt payment legislation, and better enforcement of illegal tobacco and cannabis.

In addition to prioritizing immediate action on affordability and supply, the Committee makes several other recommendations in relation to housing. Members emphasize how complex care and supportive housing initiatives must incorporate culturally diverse and appropriate care to address the unique needs of different populations. They also highlight how rental regulations must support the objective of increasing and protecting the supply of rental availability. The Committee additionally makes recommendations related to community level housing data, mortgage fraud and money laundering, and strata governance and regulations.

As it relates to public safety and justice, Committee Members support increased investments in legal aid, child and youth advocacy centres, and restorative justice. They also highlight the need to improve access to justice and modernize the court system as well as increase services and supports for survivors of sexual assault and gender-based violence, including improving coordination and collaboration. The Committee also recommends exploring alternative approaches to mental health crises, and providing funding to address youth gang issues. Other areas of interest in public safety and justice include ground disturbance, correctional services, and sex work.

With respect to social services, Committee Members support continued investments in child care, including increasing spaces and improving affordability, noting how access to child care is an economic and equity issue. They also urge a full evaluation of systems and supports for children and youth in care, and sufficient supports for children and youth with special needs and their families. Support for the charitable and non-profit sector and predictable funding for community social services

is also highlighted. Employment standards and protections are another point of focus, along with poverty reduction measures related to income and disability assistance.

On transportation and transit, the Committee recommends continued investments in active transportation as well as the development of a comprehensive, province-wide plan for public transit. Members particularly note gaps in the provision of transportation options in small, rural, remote, and Indigenous communities. They also support investments and improvements in transportation infrastructure that support trade and the efficient movement of goods, as well as investments in roads and highways in rural BC, and the aviation industry. Continued enhancements to auto insurance is another area of interest.

ADVANCED EDUCATION

ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY

Several literacy organizations advocated for increased and stable funding for their programs and emphasized the value of literacy with regard to accessing education, health, and employment. The Literacy Quesnel Society and Progressive Intercultural Community Services describe an increased need for community-based literacy programs due to the pandemic as people need literacy skills to navigate government assistance and to learn the key components needed to get back into the workforce. Comox Valley Lifelong Learning Centre noted that they are reliant on provincial sources for funding with core funding provided through the Community Adult Literacy Program while Decoda Literacy Solutions explained that the growing number applicants has led to less funding for programs. They added that time spent raising funds to keep doors open and services running means less time spent working with people to develop the literacy and essential skills they need for success. Similarly, READ Surrey/White Rock Society explained that a lack of multi-year funding for literacy programs makes this work unstable and uncertain, leaving organizations unable to plan forward-looking services and programs.

The Committee also heard about the value of adult education in building the workforce with the BC Teachers' Federation framing adult education and retraining as powerful recession-fighting tools, especially for those who are seeking to develop their language skills or enhance skills for employment and further education. The Surrey Teachers' Association also noted that teachers in this sector are aging but they cannot retire because there is no one to replace them. These organizations advocated for increased funding for adult education generally as well as for a broader range of courses to improve employment opportunities.

CAPITAL FUNDING

Organizations described a need to address barriers to student housing, noting the high cost of rental apartments as well as limited capacity on campus. The Camosun College Student Society particularly highlighted the need for funding for

student housing at colleges. The Graduate Student Societies of BC shared concerns about the high cost of apartment rentals on campus and pointed to limited options for students with families in advocating for housing dedicated to graduate students. Simon Fraser University described their designs for a 439-bed student housing project for upper-year students to meet their goal of providing student housing for ten percent of the student population.

Regarding infrastructure, the University of Victoria noted the need for additional classroom and research space to support their work in interdisciplinary research in social health and medicine. Langara College discussed safety concerns related to the age and design of many of their key buildings and requested funding to renew infrastructure and facilities. CUPE 3479 North Island College Support Staff stated that post-secondary funding should include funding for deferred maintenance rather than focusing solely on new builds. They further explained that ignoring deferred maintenance creates a more expensive problem in the future. Other universities requested funding for specific capital projects, including the Burnaby Mountain gondola at Simon Fraser University and a West Shore Campus at Royal Roads University.

INDIGENOUS STUDENTS

With respect to Indigenous students, post-secondary institutions and organizations advocated for mechanisms to improve access, inclusion, and supports. BC Colleges referred to a 2018 Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training report which indicated that Indigenous learners continue to face significant barriers to entering and succeeding in post-secondary education. They advocated for additional supports for Indigenous learners, including enhanced Elder programs, Indigenous counsellors and advisors, and emergency funds. Both Kwantlen Polytechnic University and the University of the Fraser Valley discussed Aboriginal Service Plan funding and highlighted the need for increased, sustainable funding that is extended to all institutions. Other organizations requested funding for specific programs such as the Aboriginal Access

Program at the University of British Columbia Okanagan which provides Indigenous students with a variety of pathways to a university degree, regardless of education attainment or experience. Engage Sport North Society and Northern Lights College advocated for funding for the Centre for Innovation in Indigenous Education, a joint project centred on the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions' Calls to Action.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Many organizations and institutions highlighted the value that international students bring to the province. Camosun College Student Society emphasized the important contributions made by international students and the gaps they fill in the labour market. The University of British Columbia noted that research universities in BC attract top international talent to the province and large numbers of international students go on to become permanent residents and citizens after graduation. They recommended promoting BC as a welcoming jurisdiction for international students and facilitating pathways to permanent residency. The University of the Fraser Valley Faculty and Staff Association noted the need for regulations to govern international education recruiters to prevent fraud and theft from international students in what can be a highly predatory system.

Several student unions noted that international student tuition is relied upon heavily to cover shortfalls in overall funding and that there is no cap on this tuition. North Island Students' Union cited studies which indicated that 47 percent of international students are economically vulnerable, and that financial insecurity weighs heavy on emotional health. A couple of organizations emphasized the need for predictability in tuition fees with the Douglas Students' Union stating that a lack of predictability for tuition fees is a barrier for international students and that many students skip semesters or take unfavourable loans as a result. The Students' Union of University of British Columbia Okanagan stated that capping fees for international students would allow them to predict and plan for how much the fees will be over the years.

In addition to recommendations related to international student tuition, some student unions pointed to the need for an international student strategy to provide support for these students and to assist in their cultural, social, and academic integration. Thompson Rivers University Students' Union explained that in the absence of a provincial strategy, each institution will be making decisions on their campus about

how to move forward after the COVID-19 pandemic without coordination or the benefit of any broader formalized provincial context.

ONLINE LEARNING AND DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Organizations and post-secondary institutions highlighted the importance of affordable, high-speed internet for accessing post-secondary education. Kwantlen Polytechnic University noted that the digital transformation of programs and services that was accelerated during the pandemic increased accessibility and opportunity for many students. The University of the Fraser Valley described a need for additional investments in digital infrastructure, virtual and remote learning, mobile-friendly systems, and the upgrading of core legacy systems. BC Colleges recommended improving broadband connectivity and campus Wi-Fi at colleges that are not yet adequately covered to provide better virtual access and support for learners.

OPERATIONAL FUNDING

Several organizations advocated for increases to operational funding for post-secondary education. The University of British Columbia explained that operating grants ensure post-secondary institutions can achieve their mandates; however, grant increases have not kept pace with inflation over the past 15 years despite increasing expectations around the delivery of student services and research. They recommended sustaining post-secondary operating grant funding to help institutions meet students' needs while maintaining academic excellence. A few organizations, including the BC Poverty Reduction Coalition, recommended an infusion of at least \$200 million annually across the advanced education sector so that it can remain healthy and accessible to the public.

In advocating for these operational funding increases, some organizations referenced the impact of the pandemic and the need to reduce reliance on international student tuition. The Confederation of University Faculty Associations of British Columbia recommended a stabilization fund to support institutional recovery from pandemic disruption. The Canadian Union of Public Employees British Columbia stated that lower government funding coupled with caps on domestic tuition fee increases have led to a funding model that is highly dependent on international student tuition fees; they advocated for increasing funding to at least 75 percent of base budgets.

Several student organizations advocated for a full review of funding in the sector. North Island Students' Union stated that block funding leads to higher rates of sessional instructors who are often precariously employed and less engaged. Organizations such as the Students' Union of Vancouver Community College also noted that the current model makes it unaffordable for institutions to run diverse programming and high-cost programs like upskilling and trades. With respect to regional inequities, the Kwantlen Faculty Association stated that post-secondary institutions in BC are not funded to meet the needs of their regions. Similarly, Camosun College Student Society noted that community-based post-secondary institutions continue to be underfunded. Both organizations made recommendations to revise the funding formula to address these inequities.

There were also recommendations with respect to the need for financial flexibility in running a deficit or accessing reserve funds. The University of the Fraser Valley explained that in order to maintain a surplus, universities allocate annual operating funds to cover non-cash amortization expenses related to assets which are self-funded. They stated that a legislative change to allow institutions to run a deficit for unfunded amortization would give institutions the necessary flexibility to access cash reserves. College of the Rockies stated that they need special permission to expend accumulated surplus or reserves and that they have made requests to be like other institutions and have more leeway to be strategic in their investments. Regarding surpluses, the Faculty Association of the College of New Caledonia stated that the 20 post-secondary institutions under the auspices of the Post-Secondary Employers Association have a combined \$1.13 billion in surpluses which is almost double the amount posted ten years ago. They noted that it would be better to use surpluses to create equitable working conditions for faculty, improve learning conditions for students, and meet programming needs.

Faculty associations remarked on the growth of precarious work in advanced education. The Capilano Faculty Association noted that many non-regular faculty who work in precarious conditions are members of equity-deserving groups and advocated for funding to encourage the hiring of permanent faculty to address precarious work. They also described issues related to discrimination in the post-secondary sector, many of which occur due to a lack of awareness and training, as well as a lack of diversity among faculty, administration, and staff. The Confederation of University Faculty Associations of British Columbia highlighted the work of faculty in

supporting institutions and students during the pandemic and recommended reinvesting in human infrastructure and expanding faculty personnel to support enrolment demands driven by workforce changes resulting from the pandemic. The Selkirk College Faculty Association emphasized the need to rehire educators who lost their jobs because of the pandemic and to provide them with more secure work and equal pay. The Faculty Association of the College of New Caledonia recommended eliminating the secondary scale which results in part-time faculty being paid 75 percent less than their full-time colleagues for doing the same work.

The Committee also received several requests for program funding, with post-secondary institutions and organizations, such as BC Federation of Students, highlighting need in areas such as health, early childhood education, and graduate education. The Health Sciences Association of BC described acute public-sector shortages of health science professionals, including therapists, diagnostic medical sonographers, medical laboratory technologists, and medical imaging technologists which they linked to lack of post-secondary training capacity amongst other factors. A few organizations advocated specifically for program funding in rural colleges with the Selkirk College Faculty Association noting that sustained funding for programming ensures that rural institutions can continue to offer programs and class sizes that are realistic for their region. They were joined by Federation of Post-Secondary Educators in recommending reinstating targeted funding to provide assurance that core programming will continue to be available to all, no matter where they live. The North Island College Faculty Association explained that ensuring post-secondary institutions have resources to offer varied areas of studies would have two key benefits: it promotes local access to learning, allowing students to plan and complete their studies on time, at home, where they live; and it can contribute to a broader jobs plan for the region.

Post-secondary institutions and associations also highlighted the importance of Indigenous language programs referencing how education was once a tool of oppression and is now a tool of empowerment. The Alma Mater Society of the University of British Columbia cited Call to Action 16 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada which calls on post-secondary institutions to create university, college degree and diploma programs in Indigenous languages. They noted that there is currently no standing funding for the preservation and revitalization of Indigenous languages for BC public

post-secondary institutions and emphasized the need for a province-wide degree framework for Indigenous languages. The Confederation of University Faculty Associations of British Columbia referenced several additional Calls to Action and recommended ongoing funding to support the hiring of Indigenous faculty into permanent positions and fund research programs aimed at dismantling systems of racism, discrimination, and poverty. The University of British Columbia highlighted their new Bachelor of Indigenous Land Stewardship program which is a direct-entry, four-year undergraduate program co-developed by the university's Faculty of Forestry and a First Nations-led steering committee. They requested funding for the program which has been designed to prepare students for careers working with and for Indigenous governments on land stewardship, as well as for other governments, industry, and consultancies.

Several post-secondary institutions made specific requests. The University of the Fraser Valley noted that they are the only public post-secondary institution situated in the Fraser Valley region and requested stable funding to meet the needs of the growing population base in the area. The Emily Carr Students' Union and Emily Carr Faculty Association explained that their university has a chronic deficit situation that threatens future operations with a \$7 million annual operating budget shortfall. They noted that this underfunding is due to the institution's designation as a teaching university rather than a research university and recommended that this designation be changed. Simon Fraser University outlined plans for a new medical school in Surrey and advocated for increasing the size of the Surrey campus to 5,000 full-time equivalent seats. Thompson Rivers University requested support for more graduate programs to meet student demand, noting that all of their graduate programs are entirely funded by tuition fees which is not the case elsewhere in BC.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Post-secondary institutions noted that the pandemic highlighted the importance of research and innovation. The University of British Columbia shared how their community has been at the forefront of the pandemic response, highlighting a spinoff company, Acuitas Therapeutics, which provided critical components for the Pfizer-BioNtech vaccine, based on four decades of research. They recommended investments in sectors such as life sciences and bio-manufacturing where BC can lead globally. The Confederation of University Faculty Associations of British Columbia described the negative impact of the

pandemic on some research programs due to inaccessible labs on closed campuses and the inability to conduct in-person and community-based research. Thompson Rivers University described investment in research and innovation as a way to spur economic and social recovery and highlighted the need for funding for faculty, graduate students and undergraduate students working on applied and basic research specific to the Interior. Kwantlen Polytechnic University also noted that a lack of funding for research at undergraduate universities and stated that long-term investment into applied research will enable them to broaden their reach and attract talented faculty and students from around the world.

STUDENT SUPPORTS

A joint submission from the Alma Mater Society of the University of British Columbia, Alliance of British Columbia Students, and University of Victoria Students Society stated that when students feel more supported in terms of their mental health, they are more likely to remain engaged in their academics and graduate. They added that for mental health services to be accessible for post-secondary students, services need to be culturally safe and competent, especially for those who face multiple systemic barriers and marginalization, and stated that existing services often do not meet these criteria. They recommended investments in a more extensive and robust peer-support mental health network as well as funding to train campus mental health providers to ensure services are culturally safe and competent.

The Committee also received requests for funding with respect to diversity and inclusion initiatives. Kwantlen Polytechnic University stated that expectations for authentic and lasting justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion are higher than ever and will be difficult to meet without new funding, especially to support marginalized groups. The Research Universities' Council of British Columbia noted that diverse student populations are not well served by a one-size-fits-all approach to post-secondary education and advocated for wrap-around supports, including child care, to facilitate student success. The College of the Rockies Faculty Association noted that most post-secondary institutions received mandate letters to address lasting and meaningful reconciliation in equity and racism; however, they state that this requires ongoing dedicated funding and resources.

The Alma Mater Society of the University of British Columbia, Alliance of British Columbia Students, and University of Victoria

Students Society Student also advocated for continuous funding for projects and educational tools in relation to sexual violence. They pointed to studies that found between 15 to 25 percent of women in North America will be sexually assaulted during their time at post-secondary and noted that while all post-secondary institutions in BC have now implemented stand-alone sexual violence policies, there has been variation in the degree to which these policies have been successful.

TECHNOLOGY, TRADES, AND SKILLS TRAINING

Submissions related to trades focused on skilled trades certification, funding, and apprenticeships, and highlighted the importance of trades workers in economic recovery. BC Building Trades noted that BC will need to increase financial supports to non-profit trades training providers to meet the looming skills training shortage and the commitment to skilled trades certification. They also stated that additional funding for training providers is needed to ensure technical training is available to move people through their apprenticeship in a timely and comprehensive manner. With respect to counsellors, the BC Federation of Students highlighted their value in helping apprentices navigate and successfully manage technical class offerings. Similarly, North Island Students' Union supported apprentice counselling and explained that many trades programs run independent of academic scheduling, and their access to on-campus and community supports are just as staggered as their start dates. Thompson Rivers University Students' Union stated that restoring apprenticeship offices at post-secondary institutions will help students who are looking for financial support, employment support, and career counselling.

With respect to skills training and re-skilling, the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade stated that employers are facing a skilled labour shortage that has been exacerbated beyond pre-pandemic levels, which were already problematic for BC's long-term growth. This view was also expressed by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business who emphasized the impact of the pandemic on small businesses, noting that improving skills training and investing in youth training initiatives would help businesses address the labour shortage and support their economic recovery. The Council of Canadian Innovators noted that the biggest issue hindering BC tech companies' ability to scale up is access to highly skilled workers and that investments in skills programs are needed to help gain access to talent. BC Colleges remarked on a trend toward micro-credentials with

learners opting for shorter training programs and recommended expanding the array of college led micro-credentials programs, particularly those that retrain workers and deliver hands-on experiences.

Post-secondary institutions and organizations also advocated for technology-related spaces and program seats. The University of British Columbia noted that during the COVID-19 pandemic, many British Columbians turned to post-secondary education to upgrade their skills, pursue a career change, or otherwise advance in their careers, and that with this demand, there is potential to grow technology-related programs.

Some organizations made recommendations specific to internships and work-integrated learning. First West Credit Union noted that there is potential in growing co-op and internship programs for small businesses and advocated for support in the form of incentives. BC Colleges highlighted that work-integrated learning helps people build the employment-focused skills they need to thrive immediately in the workforce. They stated that although work-integrated learning is recognized for its contribution to the success of learner and employer outcomes, colleges have reached a threshold where they are constrained by a demand from learners that is outstripping the supply of placements.

TUITION AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Submissions related to grants focused largely on the BC Access Grant program with a few others related to graduate scholarships, needs-based grants, and a grant tax offset program. Organizations highlighted the importance of grants in reducing barriers and increasing access to education. The Thompson Rivers University Students' Union explained that a grant program is the best form of student financial aid and is most effective at helping students participate who would not otherwise be able to. The Federation of Post-Secondary Educators highlighted the need to address barriers to access across all demographics in advocating for expanding eligibility for the BC Access Grant program. Some organizations, including Students Union of University of British Columbia Okanagan and North Island Students' Union, emphasized financial difficulties for students related to the pandemic as many students were underemployed and unable to work towards savings to carry them through the school year. In addition, the BC Federation of Students noted that some people who would have otherwise been able to provide financial support to the learners in their families may not be able to do so during the pandemic. The

Emily Carr Students' Union and Emily Carr Faculty Association highlighted the impact of the high cost of housing and referred to students who are forced into extreme decisions about school supplies, food, tuition, and rent. The BCIT Student Association noted that tuition tax credits do not assist with upfront challenges accessing post-secondary education and are not necessarily means-tested. They recommended reinvesting tax credits that correspond to tuition into upfront needs-based grants.

The Committee also received multiple recommendations to freeze or reduce tuition fees. Some student organizations noted that annual tuition fees have risen over 200 percent in the last two decades. The BC Federation of Students noted that the Tuition Fee Limit Policy has not prevented institutions from implementing new fees for costs previously included as part of tuition. In addition, they stated that the policy does not apply to new courses; as such, institutions commonly collapse, rename, and slightly adjust programs, to essentially restart the same programs at a higher cost to students. Some organizations viewed the issue through the lens of poverty reduction and equity. The Camosun College Faculty Association noted that many students face barriers because they are Indigenous, persons of colour, or gender-non-conforming. They were of the view that the financial costs of post-secondary education need to be reduced or eliminated so that everyone has the ability to pursue an education without the burden of student debt. Similarly, First Call: Child and Youth Advocacy Society stated that high tuition fees and student loans are barriers for young families who need post-secondary education to qualify for jobs with family-sustaining wages.

CONCLUSIONS

Reflecting on input and recommendations from post-secondary institutions, faculty, and students, both domestic and international, the Committee noted several operational pressures for the post-secondary sector. Members highlighted the central role that post-secondary institutions play in shaping the future workforce and driving research and innovation in the province. As the economy and needs of the workforce evolve, the Committee agreed that post-secondary institutions should examine ways to expand capacity to meet educational demand in BC. Members also recognized the impact of the pandemic on the sector and discussed the need for financial flexibility, with clearly defined accountability. Committee Members also acknowledged the volume of input regarding faculty and

difficulties associated with precarious work in the sector as well as high demand for programs in a variety of areas including health and trades.

The Committee additionally discussed the challenge of housing affordability across BC and the impact on students. Committee Members acknowledged that many international students are exploited in the workplace due in part to a lack of housing available to them. Members also discussed the challenges with accommodation for students pursuing trades education and micro-credentials where courses are shorter, making finding rental housing particularly difficult. They noted that initiatives are already underway and further recognized that building more student housing frees up other housing in the community. As such, they agreed that efforts to build student housing should be urgently addressed, particularly at smaller colleges. Committee Members further stressed that post-secondary infrastructure has to keep up with the evolving role of post-secondary institutions in the modern economy and ensure institutions are able to provide full services to students, and discussed opportunities to encourage and support post-secondary institutions with infrastructure investments.

With respect to international students, the Committee reflected on input from student unions who emphasized that international student tuition is unpredictable, and is used to help fund shortfalls in post-secondary education. Committee Members also recognized that international students enrich the post-secondary education system and the province more broadly, and emphasized the need to encourage diversity, ensure that students are treated fairly, and have transparency with respect to tuition fees. Members noted that many international students choose to stay in the province upon completion of their studies. They agreed that ensuring BC is competitive will help the province to remain attractive to international students and bring talent to the province. The Committee also discussed ways to best support international students who are looking for help and to ensure their safety.

Committee Members discussed the inequity of opportunities for research and innovation outside of the major institutions. They noted a link between research and social and economic recovery, and supported continued investment in graduate and undergraduate research opportunities across BC.

The Committee also discussed the significant rates of sexualized violence on campus and recognized that sexualized violence on campus disproportionately impacts women, and acknowledged

the long-term health, social and economic impacts violence has on students, including their ability to complete school and obtain their skills and qualifications. They agreed that additional supports are needed to address sexualized and gender-based violence. They also noted that the pandemic has had a significant impact on student mental health and recognized the importance of further supports in this area.

With respect to trades and skills training, the Committee acknowledged their importance and noted that several initiatives in this regard are underway. Committee Members particularly recognized the value of co-op programs and micro-credentialing to get people into the workforce more quickly. Members additionally discussed the impact and cost to employers associated with apprenticeship programs and the need to assist with trades training of individuals in the workforce. They noted the need to address how trades training has not, in the past, had the same value placed on it as other kinds of post-secondary education.

Committee Members acknowledged the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on students, many of whom are dependent on summer jobs to generate income for tuition. They noted how institutions can increase fees by renaming and adjusting programs, and how students also have additional ancillary fees and education expenses, including indirect costs such as transportation and parking, and discussed how to increase transparency in this area. Members also contemplated temporary increases to student grants, noting that these investments can also reduce poverty. With respect to Indigenous students, Committee Members acknowledged the importance of supports and noted that programs and services are not equitable across the province.

As it relates to adult education and literacy, Committee Members emphasized that investments in this area are important for equity, poverty reduction, and building the labour force and recognized the need to properly resource these programs. They also acknowledged that many teachers in this sector are retired or retiring and that there is a need for funding to support stable employment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee recommends to the Legislative Assembly that the provincial government:

Adult Education and Literacy

7. Increase funding for adult education and literacy, including increasing the number of funded courses to reflect a broad range of educational needs and interests and to improve employment opportunities for individuals.

Capital Funding

8. Allocate resources to support post-secondary institutions to build infrastructure to provide full services on campus such as recreation and wellness centres, and address the urgent need for student housing, particularly at smaller colleges.

Indigenous Students

9. Provide additional supports for Indigenous learners, including Elder programs and similar initiatives that provide connection to culture and community, Indigenous counsellors and advisors, and mechanisms to ensure improved access and affordability.

International Students

10. Recognize the value and contributions of international students and diversity by continuing to promote BC as a welcoming jurisdiction for international students including examining the business model, providing wrap-around supports, and ensuring safety and fair treatment as well as transparency and predictability regarding tuition fees.

Operational Funding

11. Recognize the value and importance of post-secondary education by examining the funding model to ensure investments position BC to meet the needs of the future workforce, address operational pressures and programming demands, and include consideration for short-term financial flexibility with clearly defined accountabilities and transparency to support recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Research and Innovation

12. Provide consistent and ongoing funding for graduate and undergraduate student research across the province to support communities and spur economic and social recovery.

Student Supports

13. Increase supports to address sexualized and gender-based violence on campus and to ensure a more extensive and robust mental health network at post-secondary institutions across the province.

Technology, Trades, and Skills Training

14. Increase investments and opportunities for upskilling, reskilling, co-ops, and micro-credential programs as well as apprenticeships and trades training.

Tuition and Financial Assistance

15. Reduce financial barriers to post-secondary education, including by temporarily expanding grant funding, to ensure students have increased levels of support for the years following the COVID-19 pandemic and to encourage participation in and completion of post-secondary education.
16. Improve transparency regarding course fees, ancillary fees, and other expenses related to the direct and indirect costs of education.

Students with Special Needs

112. Increase supports for students with special needs, including providing supports and training to staff to support inclusion and improving early identification and assessment.

Vulnerable Students

113. Support the expansion, coordination, and sustainability of school meal programs, such as the BC School Fruit and Vegetable Nutritional Program, and encourage collaboration with BC agricultural producers.
114. Increase funding for mental health supports in schools, including student-focused resources, wrap-around services, and personnel.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

EQUITY AND INCLUSION

Indigenous Peoples and Reconciliation

1. Ensure budgetary and policy decisions and actions are made through the lens of reconciliation and anchored in the Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the Calls for Justice from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, and the recommendations in the In Plain Sight Report.
2. Provide support to the Métis Nation British Columbia for programs and services to Métis people.

Systemic Barriers – Gender and Race

3. Provide predictable investments in programs, services, and supports across all sectors to improve gender and racial equity, access, opportunity, safety, and participation.

Accessibility

4. Continue a comprehensive approach to improving the accessibility of public infrastructure across the province.
5. Expand medical coverage or explore new ways to reduce the significant personal cost of accessibility modifications and mobility aids for individuals, including vehicle lifts, ramps, or hoists.

Digital Connectivity

6. Recognize the critical importance of digital connectivity and significantly enhance and expedite efforts to ensure the provision of affordable accessible internet across the province, with particular attention to rural, remote, and Indigenous communities.

ADVANCED EDUCATION

Adult Education and Literacy

7. Increase funding for adult education and literacy, including increasing the number of funded courses to reflect a broad range of educational needs and interests and to improve employment opportunities for individuals.

Capital Funding

8. Allocate resources to support post-secondary institutions to build infrastructure to provide full services on campus such as recreation and wellness centres, and address the urgent need for student housing, particularly at smaller colleges.

Indigenous Students

9. Provide additional supports for Indigenous learners, including Elder programs and similar initiatives that provide connection to culture and community, Indigenous counsellors and advisors, and mechanisms to ensure improved access and affordability.

International Students

10. Recognize the value and contributions of international students and diversity by continuing to promote BC as a welcoming jurisdiction for international students including examining the business model, providing wrap-around supports, and ensuring safety and fair treatment as well as transparency and predictability regarding tuition fees.

Operational Funding

11. Recognize the value and importance of post-secondary education by examining the funding model to ensure investments position BC to meet the needs of the future workforce, address operational pressures and programming demands, and include consideration for short-term financial flexibility with clearly defined accountabilities and transparency to support recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Research and Innovation

12. Provide consistent and ongoing funding for graduate and undergraduate student research across the province to support communities and spur economic and social recovery.

Student Supports

13. Increase supports to address sexualized and gender-based violence on campus and to ensure a more extensive and robust mental health network at post-secondary institutions across the province.

Technology, Trades, and Skills Training

14. Increase investments and opportunities for upskilling, reskilling, co-ops, and micro-credential programs as well as apprenticeships and trades training.

Tuition and Financial Assistance

15. Reduce financial barriers to post-secondary education, including by temporarily expanding grant funding, to ensure students have increased levels of support for the years following the COVID-19 pandemic and to encourage participation in and completion of post-secondary education.
16. Improve transparency regarding course fees, ancillary fees, and other expenses related to the direct and indirect costs of education.

ARTS, LIBRARIES AND SPORT

Arts and Culture

17. Support recovery in the arts and culture sector by providing predictable, long-term funding, providing a live entertainment labour tax credit for BC-based productions, and promoting attendance at festivals, fairs, rodeos and other arts and culture events.
18. Explore mechanisms to support individual artists to eliminate insecurity and precarity.
19. Partner with other levels of government to invest in capital infrastructure for the arts and culture sector.
20. Create a program to incentivize the purchase of BC-published books in schools and libraries.

Digital Media, Music, and Film

21. Support the digital media, music, and film industry by implementing a labour tax credit for the creation of made-in-BC content for the broadcast sector, ensuring BC remains competitive in attracting productions and operations to the province, and affording equal opportunities for artists and companies throughout BC.

Public Libraries

22. Increase provincial operational funding for public libraries and provide targeted support for libraries in rural, remote, and Indigenous communities.

Sport

23. Increase investment in the sport sector, including providing an additional \$12 million over three years to implement the provincial Pathways to Sport strategic framework, to promote recovery in the sector, increase participation in sport, address gender equity in sport participation, and encourage healthy living and wellness.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Agriculture, Fish and Food Security

24. Support BC's agriculture industry and strengthen food security by addressing barriers to new and continued agricultural activity, including examining how the Agricultural Land Reserve can better facilitate farming, providing supports to new farmers, and encouraging best practices through extension services.
25. Invest in agricultural infrastructure, including water infrastructure and aging and depleted infrastructure such as fences, as well as climate adaptation and emissions-reduction measures.
26. Ensure a robust regulatory framework and strengthen protections and safety for temporary farm workers, including implementing a new mid-season inspection process in consultation with industry.
27. Support the role of the PNE as a provincial leader in agricultural outreach.
28. Implement a minimum wholesale price on absolute alcohol.
29. Increase support for aquaculture and processing in BC, including working with the federal government on regulatory and protection measures to enhance aquaculture.

Forestry

30. Ensure reforms to forest management and practices support reconciliation, healthy forests, climate action, strong communities, and value-added opportunities, in consultation and collaboration with Indigenous peoples, industry and local communities, including developing a community-based forest sector and strengthening economic transition supports for families and communities.

Jobs and Immigration

31. Take a comprehensive approach to addressing labour shortages by targeting untapped sources of skilled workers, investing in diversity and inclusion strategies, encouraging healthy and safe workplaces, and working with the federal government to increase BC's allocation for the Provincial Nominee Program.

Natural Resource and Rural Development

32. Significantly increase resources to ensure sufficient capacity within natural resource ministries and Indigenous communities to provide predictability and improve timeliness of permitting as well as to enhance monitoring and oversight.
33. Continue the pathway to electrification and decarbonization of mining and other natural resource operations.
34. Increase funding for Geoscience BC.
35. Consider the value-added resource manufacturing sectors of chemistry and plastics as a strategic supply chain sector for the province, and provide supports to build new, low-carbon and zero-carbon facilities, where possible, or deploy emission reduction technologies.

36. Provide dedicated supports to strengthen and diversify rural economies through a mechanism such as the Rural Dividend Fund.

Tourism

37. Support recovery and expansion of the tourism sector, including exploring partnerships with Indigenous groups and communities, promoting environmentally-friendly visitor experiences and sustainable business practices, expanding accessibility and inclusion initiatives, and increasing investment in tourism marketing.

Trade

38. Reduce interprovincial trade barriers to support small- and medium-sized businesses, and strengthen investments to support international trade and exports.

Technology and Innovation

39. Continue to embrace technology and innovation as critical drivers of economic growth and resilience with increased investment in tech talent and training, support for entrepreneurs to scale up, and a competitive tax eco-system that encourages high-growth domestic innovators to stay and build businesses in BC.
40. Support the development of the life sciences and biomanufacturing strategy, including training and development of needed talent.
41. Ensure that the benefits of technology and innovation are felt around the province by working with rural and northern communities to support innovation and create job growth.
42. Provide tax incentives to BC-based businesses using, building, and commercializing quantum computing technologies.

ENVIRONMENT

Climate Change and Clean Energy

43. Urgently address the climate crisis by mobilizing all levers of government and establishing a cross-ministry climate preparedness and adaptation taskforce to implement scientifically-informed solutions developed by and in consultation with Indigenous peoples, local governments, community organizations, and businesses.
44. Ensure BC's climate measures are actionable, adaptable, and flexible to address the needs and circumstances of different industries, communities, and regions, and result in meaningful reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.
45. Continue to incent and invest in clean and renewable energy sources to expediate the transition to a net-zero economy.

Electric and Low-Emission Vehicles

46. Maintain full funding for Clean BC's Go Electric BC Program and carefully examine hydro infrastructure to ensure that BC's electric grid will be able to support the transition to electric vehicles.
47. Support opportunities to convert commercial vehicles to zero- and low-emission fleets, including encouraging research and leveraging opportunities with respect to hydrogen.

Energy Efficiency and Buildings Standards

48. Examine existing incentives, programs, and job training programs, and engage building professionals, to ensure that BC has all the resources necessary to meet the retrofitting targets outlined by CleanBC while also alleviating high energy costs for those most in need.

Environmental Protection and Conservation

49. Better integrate science-based approaches, including local and Indigenous knowledge and practices into conservation, protection and predator management efforts, including wildlife conservation and management and fire mitigation practices.
50. Establish a permanent and sustainable fish, wildlife, and habitat management fund to support conservation activities by government, community organizations, the private sector, and Indigenous peoples.

Invasive Species

51. Significantly increase funding for invasive species prevention, monitoring, regulation, inspection, and mitigation as well as for preventing and responding to invasive species and noxious weeds incursions that arise as a direct result of wildfires and climate change.

Parks and Recreation

52. Provide increased funding for parks, recreation and trails to address gaps in maintenance and staff, including dedicated funding to community-based organizations for trail maintenance and development.

Recycling and Waste

53. Explore opportunities to establish a comprehensive province-wide waste management program that focuses on increased public awareness, local recycling of plastic and aluminum materials, and reducing waste, including mandating recycled content standards for all plastic products and packaging.

Water

54. Increase funding for watershed security to advance maintenance, conservation, and protection of BC's watersheds.
55. Update and modernize dams to meet safety standards and explore new ways to store water, such as small dams on tributaries.
56. Provide \$1 million per year over five years for the review of the Okanagan Lake Regulation System and Operating Plan.

FISCAL AND REGULATORY POLICY

Budgetary and Taxation Policy

57. Ensure BC's budgetary and taxation framework enables proactive public spending to address urgent challenges, supports a healthy and sustainable economy, enables competitiveness and innovation, and supports equality while ensuring confidence in the province's finances.

Co-operatives

58. Support the co-operative sector by investing in capacity-building and scaling of existing co-operatives and investing in the development of new co-operatives and community-based enterprises.

COVID-19 Recovery and Measures

59. Evaluate and adapt pandemic-related supports for individuals and small- and medium-sized businesses to ensure they are responsive to need, and support short- and long-term recovery.

Prompt Payment

60. Prioritize the introduction of prompt payment legislation.

Specific Taxation Measures

61. Re-evaluate commercial property assessment categories with a view to alleviating the impact of development potential on property assessments and associated taxation.
62. Examine and address non-compliance in the collection and remittance of PST by non-resident companies.
63. Evaluate and review opportunities to adjust the employer health tax thresholds.
64. Examine graduating the corporate income tax rate between small and large companies.
65. Review the luxury tax structure, thresholds, and policies to ensure it applies only to luxury items.

Tobacco and Cannabis

66. Ensure robust enforcement of illegal tobacco and cannabis.

HEALTH

Chronic Diseases and Complex Conditions

67. Increase access to a range of arthritis treatment options, including arthritis-specific primary and community care, and work with stakeholders to reduce wait times for joint replacements.
68. Fund specialized services to support women with both the trauma of intimate partner violence and brain injury, including training and awareness for community-based service providers, first responders and law enforcement to recognize brain injury, and prevention programs aimed at keeping people from becoming either a victim or perpetrator of intimate partner violence.
69. Reduce barriers and enhance coverage of diabetic medications and devices, including new technology such as FreeStyle Libre, and commit the necessary resources to implement a provincial diabetes strategy using the Diabetes 360° framework, as well as fully participate in federal, provincial, and territorial consultations on the development of a nationwide diabetes strategy.
70. Ensure individuals with Down syndrome and their families have access to appropriate services and supports, including access to registered therapy providers.
71. Ensure individuals with lymphatic disorders are able to proactively manage their condition by providing access to diagnostic services, treatment options, and appropriate equipment and supply.
72. Prioritize and fund the development of myalgic encephalomyelitis-specific billing codes for BC clinicians and the development of continuing medical education credits, modules or incentives for BC physicians, medical students, and other medical professionals to attend training about myalgic encephalomyelitis.
73. Implement a comprehensive British Columbia lung health strategy.
74. Establish a Cancer Prevention Strategy as part of BC's 10-Year Cancer plan and continue to support the Canadian Cancer Society's Centre for Cancer Prevention and Support through creating an Innovation Fund for Cancer Prevention.
75. Further invest in cancer care and treatments to meet the growing need from the aging population and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.
76. Introduce a remote oral cancer screening program to expedite the triage of the potential oral cancer patients in remote areas.

77. Supply an automated breast ultrasound machine and screening products for every public hospital and clinic that has a mammogram machine and provide training to mammogram technicians to perform automated breast ultrasounds to address the shortage of sonographers, improve the efficiency of breast cancer screening, and improve the early detection of cancer in dense breast tissue.
78. Designate a separate Medical Services Plan code for breast screening ultrasounds necessary for dense breast tissue with a recommended cost to perform the procedure.
79. Expand Medical Services Plan coverage for the prostate-specific antigen test for asymptomatic individuals when ordered by a physician.

Community Care and Seniors

80. Immediately review the continuum of long-term care to home care services to ensure high quality, culturally-appropriate care, including: strongly defining and implementing care, health and safety standards; ensuring robust oversight and operator accountability; ensuring adequate staffing levels and hours of care; and incorporating resident and family voices.
81. Implement a comprehensive plan for the development of affordable long-term care and assisted living spaces to ensure British Columbians receive appropriate care.
82. Support seniors to age in place by increasing home support services and programs, including the Better at Home program, adjusting the co-payment for home support services so it is equitable to long-term care funding, and exploring innovative, affordable aging in place models, such as co-housing, HomeShare projects, and co-operative housing.
83. Increase investments in community supports, caregiver supports, and respite programs, as well as programs and supports for individuals with dementia and Alzheimer's.

Health Human Resources

84. Support education, recruitment, and retention efforts to address the shortage of health professionals, especially in rural and remote areas, by expanding post-secondary training capacity and clinical leadership opportunities, providing incentives, and removing barriers for internationally trained health professionals with respect to bridging and licensing.
85. Leverage existing health human resources to ensure access to timely and appropriate care by addressing administrative and logistical barriers to service provision and access to information, and by ensuring all health professionals are supported and enabled to work to their full scope of practice.
86. Expand and significantly increase funding for multi-disciplinary, integrated, community-based primary care networks, including integrating additional health professionals such as psychologists and chiropractors, into this team-based model.
87. Improve access to effective chronic pain management services by allocating \$2.7 million over four years for a pilot initiative within primary care networks in ten communities for chiropractors to treat, manage and prevent chronic pain conditions, particularly for vulnerable populations with low-income.

Hospice and Palliative Care

88. Increase investments in hospices and palliative care as well as grief and bereavement programs, including developing and implementing provincial standards and accreditation for hospice care, expanding palliative facility space, improving training for hospice workers, expanding grief and bereavement programs, and increasing awareness of the needs of people in grief.

89. Increase annual funding to Canuck Place Children's Hospice.

Medical Coverage and Services

90. Invest in prevention and early intervention of medical conditions, including expanding coverage for medical aids and prostheses, rehabilitation, psychology, and dental care.

Mental Health and Addictions

91. Invest in the continuum of mental health services and infrastructure for all ages recognizing the specificity of support required for different populations and varying degrees of mental health and addiction challenges, including prevention, early intervention, community care, integrated wrap-around support, addictions harm reduction and recovery, and involuntary care.

Pharmaceuticals

92. Implement a PharmaCare strategy to reduce the cost of prescriptions and ensure excellent access to innovative medicines, including working with the federal government on cost, coverage, and access to prescription drugs.

Public Health

93. Support a holistic approach to population health and promotion, including implementing a social determinants of health lens in all policies and actions, investing resources to strengthen capacity and public health data collection, increasing investments in physical activity and wellness, and using available regulatory and taxation tools to incent healthy behaviour.
94. Fund universal access to no-cost prescription contraception.
95. Explore the effectiveness of various methods and practices, such as antimicrobial copper, to reduce the opportunity for virus and bacteria transmission in public spaces.
96. Invest in public health initiatives and professionals to support maternal health and healthy infant development, with special attention to low-income families and those facing other threats to their ability to thrive.
97. Adopt a gendered approach to healthcare, including a Women's Health Strategy that reflects the distinct equity issues affecting women's health and well-being in BC.

Research

98. Provide reliable funding for health science research, including funding for Genome BC and TRIUMF, as well as funding for women's health research.

Rural and Remote Health Care

99. Ensure British Columbians who require ambulatory medical services outside of their home communities receive timely and reliable return transportation.
100. Explore innovative ways to expand health services in communities and through technology to rural, remote, and underserved areas of the province. [See also Recommendation 6 in Equity and Inclusion]

HOUSING

Affordability and Supply

101. Prioritize and take immediate action to increase the affordability and supply of housing by seriously examining all provincial policy levers, including: blanket zoning; municipal incentives to increase density and address development and permitting processes and timelines; taxation; co-op housing; short-term rental regulations; and development incentives and other creative solutions and partnerships.

Complex Care, Supportive and Social Housing

102. Ensure all complex care and supportive housing initiatives across the province incorporate culturally diverse and appropriate care, including specific supports for women leaving violence, Indigenous people, youth, seniors, individuals with disabilities, and those at risk of or experiencing homelessness.
103. Develop provincial guidance on the methodology for community level housing data, such as point-in-time homeless counts, to establish consistent data collection, support the capacity of smaller communities, and to better inform housing and program decisions at all levels of government.

Money Laundering, Mortgage Fraud and Data

104. Combat mortgage fraud and money laundering in the real estate market, including strengthening enforcement and penalties for crime, and improving education for the public and enforcement agencies.

Rental Regulations

105. Ensure new and existing rental regulations are meeting the objective of increasing and protecting the supply of properly maintained rental availability, including balancing the rights of both landlords and tenants, and provide adequate funding to the Residential Tenancy Branch to enforce regulations.

Strata

106. Reform strata governance and implement structured regulations to address issues related to building maintenance plans, insurance coverage, the definition of a unit, and transparency for current and future unit owners, including providing education and training to unit owners and strata corporations on their roles and responsibilities.

K-12 EDUCATION

Capital Funding

107. Re-examine capital funding with a view to being more forward-looking and responsive, addressing inequities and gaps with respect to provincial funding for IT and maintenance, and reviewing policies regarding district contributions and portable construction.
108. Prioritize methods to fast-track construction of new schools and additions, including exploring the use of modular construction and prioritizing means to lower the environmental impact of new and existing schools.

Operational Funding

109. Review the operational funding formula for K-12 education to ensure it is proactive and transparent, based on the identified needs of school districts, with appropriate consideration for anticipated population changes, equitable distribution of resources, supports to deliver the new curriculum and reconciliation initiatives, increased health and safety measures, and student transportation.

Distributed Learning and Independent Schools

110. Recognize online and distributed learning programs as integral to the K-12 education system and re-examine funding to ensure these programs continue to meet the needs of all learners, particularly children and families in rural and remote areas and children and youth with special needs.

Recruitment and Retention

111. Explore creative measures to recruit and retain teachers, including providing incentives, providing relief to teachers in school districts with high housing costs, addressing work-life balance challenges, and reducing barriers for immigrants and internationally educated teachers.

Students with Special Needs

112. Increase supports for students with special needs, including providing supports and training to staff to support inclusion and improving early identification and assessment.

Vulnerable Students

113. Support the expansion, coordination, and sustainability of school meal programs, such as the BC School Fruit and Vegetable Nutritional Program, and encourage collaboration with BC agricultural producers.
114. Increase funding for mental health supports in schools, including student-focused resources, wrap-around services, and personnel.

PUBLIC SAFETY AND JUSTICE

Access to Justice and Legal Aid

115. Increase investments in legal aid and legal clinics, including improving access to justice in family law matters, expanding eligibility and coverage limits for legal aid, expanding the scope of services, and increasing training for practitioners on trauma-informed and culturally safe practices.
116. Provide stable and adequate funding to responsive services such as the child and youth advocacy centres across the province.

Correctional Services

117. Ensure cross-sectoral collaboration between the justice system and the social service sector especially during the reintegration period for vulnerable offenders.
118. Fund the Forensic Psychiatric Hospital to accept people with high mental health needs to live with dignity when they must be held in a secure setting.

Court Services

119. Improve access to and modernize the courts and justice system through investments in technology, equipment, and infrastructure, especially in rural and remote communities.

Gender-Based Violence and Sexual Assault

120. Increase services and supports for survivors of sexual assault and gender-based violence by providing multi-year funding for community-based and Indigenous-led programs, providing wrap-around and culturally appropriate services and supports, and investing in violence prevention programs and transition housing.
121. Support collaboration and coordination amongst service providers, health professionals, and health authorities to improve services to survivors of sexual assault and gender-based violence.

Ground Disturbance

122. Work with municipalities and stakeholders to address ground disturbance and prevent damage to underground infrastructure, and promote awareness of the BC 1 Call website and phone number.

Natural Disasters and Emergency Preparedness

123. Significantly strengthen emergency management planning and readiness, and ensure existing plans and strategies are comprehensive, proactive and incorporate: prevention, mitigation, adaptation, response, and recovery; improved communication and coordination with residents, local governments and other stakeholders; evacuation of long-term care and other health care settings; local knowledge; and investment in locally-owned equipment.

Policing

124. Explore alternative approaches to mental health crises that are less reliant on police and increase funding to mental health and social services to address the increasing complexity of these issues.
125. Provide local, multi-year, culturally relevant funding to address youth gang issues.

Restorative Justice

126. Provide increased and sustainable funding for restorative justice programs and better integrate restorative justice within the justice system, including ensuring programs are culturally appropriate to reflect the province's diversity.

Sex Work

127. Provide increased and ongoing funding for programs and services, including peer-based violence prevention services, that promote the safety and security of all individuals who engage in sex work regardless of gender, circumstance, or type of sex work, and without the sole focus being on exiting or trafficking services.
128. Provide ongoing funding for the provincial bad date and aggressor reporting system.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Charitable and Non-Profit Sector

129. Continue to support the charitable and non-profit sector, including exploring incentives to donate through tax credits.

Child Care and Early Childhood Development

130. Continue investments to improve access to affordable, flexible child care that meets the needs of local communities, including providing before- and after-school care options and exploring creative partnerships with businesses and other organizations to create more child care spaces.
131. Continue to invest in training, recruitment, and retention of early childhood educators, including consideration for shifting training to an apprenticeship model.

Children and Youth in Care

132. Fully evaluate systems and supports currently in place for children and youth in care, including improving early adulthood supports for youth aging out of care to support independence, supporting family and cultural connections, and improving supports to kinship caregivers.

Children and Youth with Special Needs

133. Provide sufficient supports and services for children and youth with special needs and their families, including ensuring early identification, addressing wait times, and providing timely access to early intervention services, and increasing income supports.

Community Social Services and Social Policy

134. Provide predictable, increased, multi-year funding to the community social services sector to enable long-term planning with a focus on measuring and monitoring outcomes, including addressing compensation challenges.

Employment Standards

135. Significantly increase funding to the Employment Standards Branch and the Labour Relations Board to hire additional staff and reduce lengthy wait times.
136. Expedite the enhancement of labour protections for gig workers.

Poverty Reduction

137. Review the eligibility and administration of income and disability assistance, including earning exemptions policies and thresholds, with a view to providing flexibility, reducing barriers to work, and providing targeted support to the most vulnerable.

TRANSPORTATION AND TRANSIT

Active Transportation (Cycling and Walking)

138. Continue investments in active transportation in partnership with local governments and community-based organizations, with particular attention to small, rural, and remote communities.

Auto Insurance

139. Continue to enhance innovation, accessibility, service, and affordability of auto insurance through ICBC.

Public Transit

140. Develop a comprehensive, province-wide public transit plan to ensure accessible, affordable public transportation options are available across the province, with a view to addressing gaps in the provision of regional transportation services, investing in electric buses, increasing accessible transportation options such as HandyDART, and addressing the needs of small, rural, remote, and Indigenous communities.

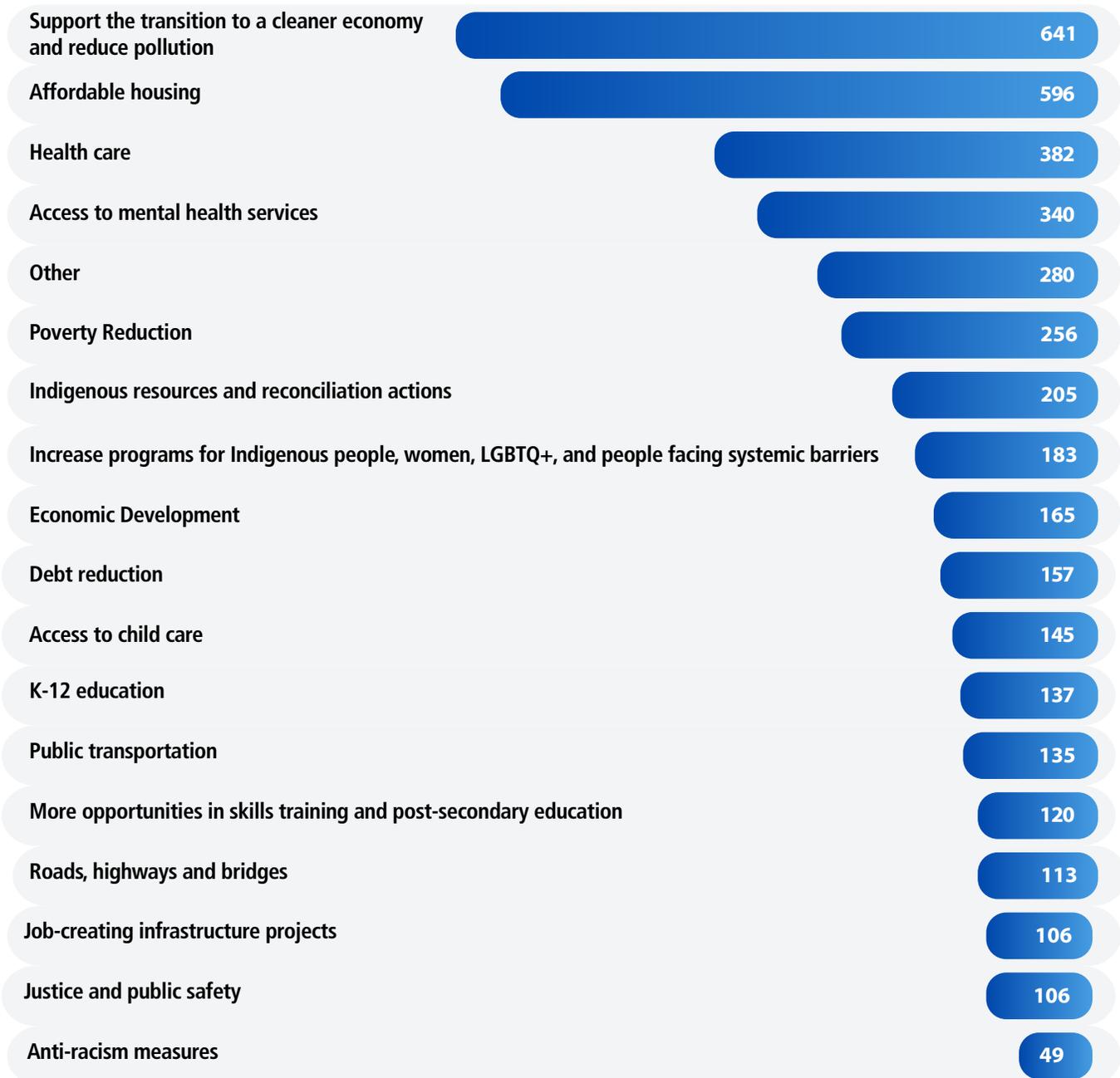
Transportation Infrastructure

141. Ensure that investments and improvements in transportation infrastructure support trade and the efficient movement of goods to market while also leveraging opportunities to expand active and public transportation and implement climate-friendly solutions.
142. Invest in roads and highways in rural BC.
143. Support the aviation industry in the Lower Mainland, the Okanagan, and in northern BC where aviation-based industries are struggling to grow.

APPENDIX A: SURVEY RESULTS

QUESTION 1

The BC government is committed to making life more affordable, delivering the services people count on and building a resilient, sustainable economy. Please select three priorities to help make life better for you, your family and your community as we move through recovery. (1,414 Responses)

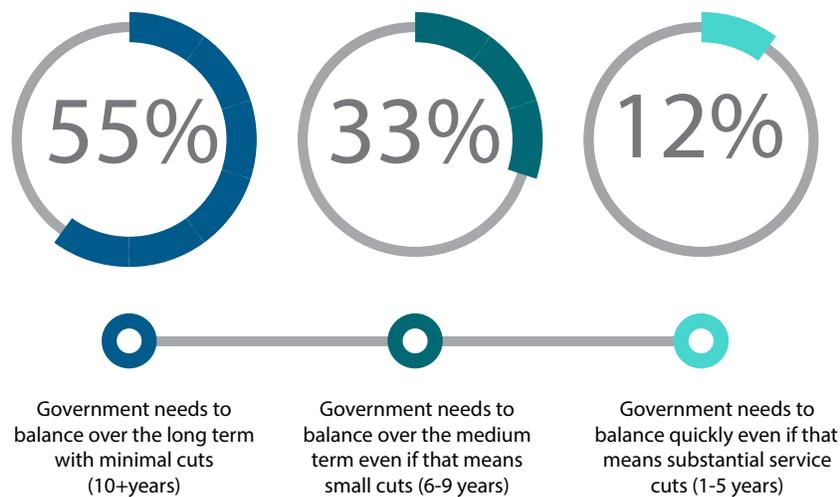


“Other” Summary

Responses in the “other” category were overwhelmingly focused on environmental protection, natural resource extraction and climate change (38 percent of “other” responses). The main areas of concern were regarding preserving old growth forests and natural areas, eliminating government subsidies for natural resource industries, and taking more aggressive measures towards mitigating climate change. Other topics mentioned include: increasing support programs for persons with disabilities and individuals with neurodiverse needs, COVID-19 economic recovery and public health measures, and increasing staffing and resources for healthcare.

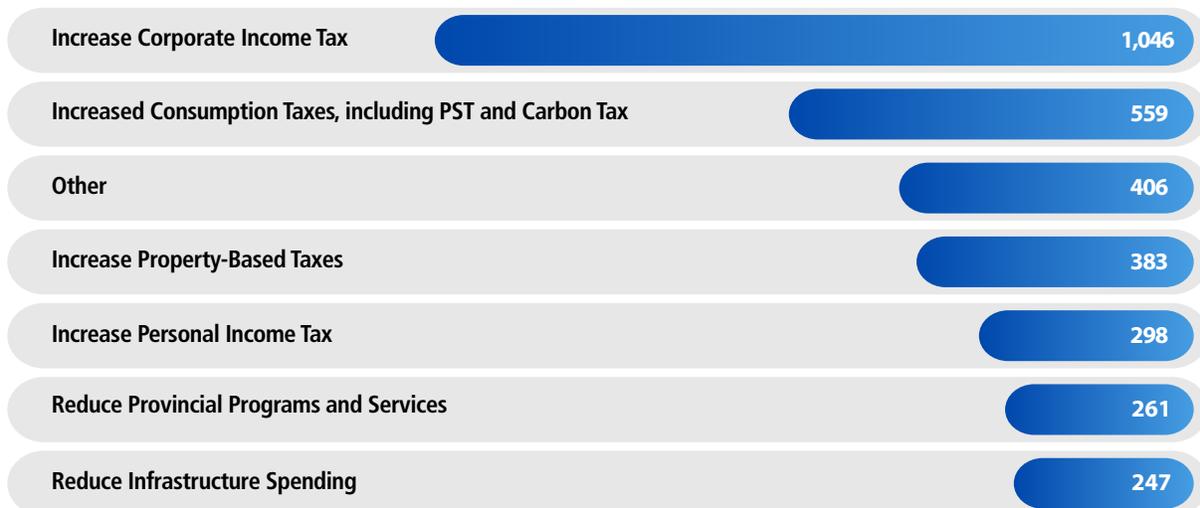
QUESTION 2

Part of BC’s economic recovery includes a sustainable path back to a balanced provincial budget. Early projections of a return to balance are seven to nine years, and a more detailed timeline will be outlined in Budget 2022. Which statement below best matches your views about returning to balance? (1,399 Responses)



QUESTION 3

The pandemic has required unprecedented spending to help people, businesses, and communities. The British Columbia government has various tools it can use to reduce provincial debt over time. Check the options you can support. (Select all that apply) (1,412 Responses)

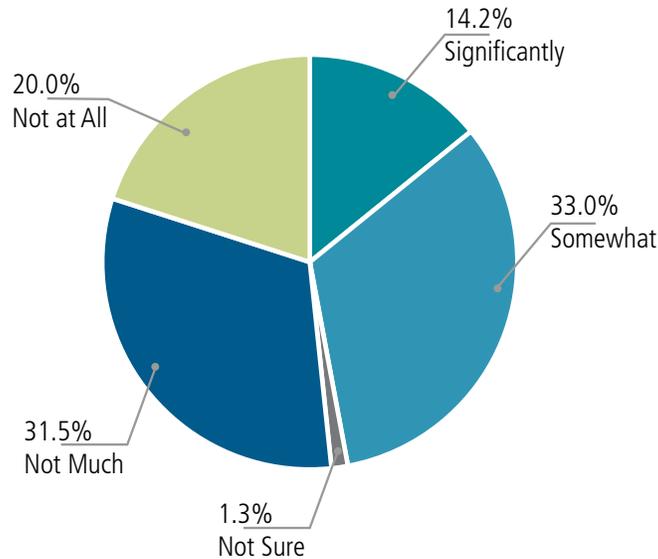


“Other” Summary

Responses in the “other” category are largely split three ways. The first was to reduce the size of government including reducing services and programs, and improving the efficiency of government spending. The second most frequent theme was implementing a wealth tax; this is generally viewed as increasing taxes on both the income and assets of the wealthiest British Columbians. The final theme was eliminating natural resource subsidies with a focus on eliminating subsidies to the oil and gas sector as a means to reduce provincial debt over time.

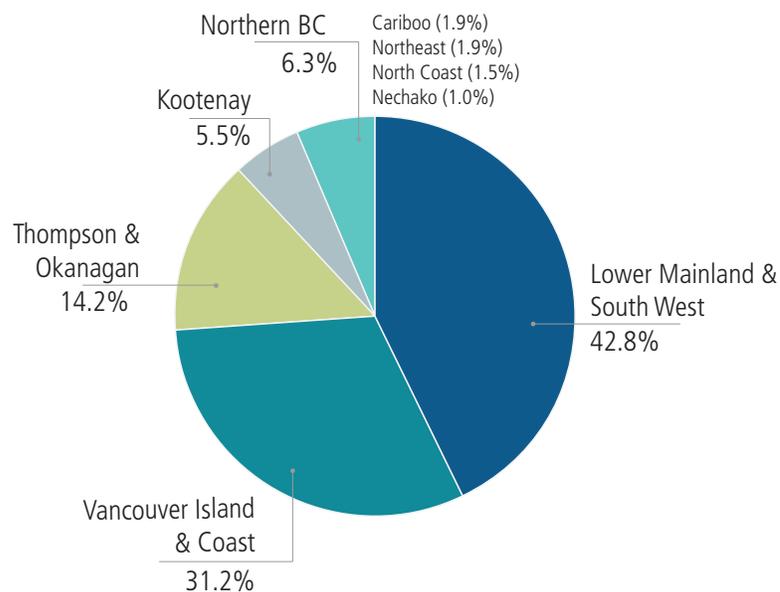
QUESTION 4

How has the pandemic affected your financial well-being? (1,413 Responses)



QUESTION 5

Please identify your region. (1,412 Responses)



A Submission to the
2022 Pre-Budget Consultations of the
Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services
Prepared By
the Confederation of University Faculty Associations of British Columbia (CUFA BC)
September 2021

The Confederation of University Faculty Association of British Columbia

The Confederation of University Faculty Associations of British Columbia (CUFA BC) supports high-quality post-secondary education and research in BC. We represent over 5,500 faculty members including professors, lecturers, instructors, academic librarians, and other academic staff at five research-intensive universities in British Columbia. These are: the University of British Columbia, Simon Fraser University, the University of Northern British Columbia, Royal Roads University, and the University of Victoria. The Confederation has been in existence for fifty years and works closely with the unionized Faculty Associations at each institution.

Our Submission

The pandemic has demonstrated the need to do things differently in the 2022 provincial budget and to take this opportunity to rebalance our economic and social systems. Public universities have been instrumental to the Government of British Columbia's priorities in putting people first; lasting and meaningful reconciliation; addressing equity and racism; creating a better future through addressing climate change; and contributing to a strong, sustainable economy that works for everyone. BC's public universities have long been recognized as vital to ensuring the social and economic well-being of the province and British Columbians. Our members provide a crucial level of support to Government and the public, driving the recovery, innovation, and transformation of our society.

Our resiliency as a province rests, to a significant extent, on the education provided at universities and on the knowledge produced there. Our submission offers a pathway to an economic and public policy environment that will build a strong, educated future for British Columbians. We urge you to consider our recommendations in the context of our transforming world. This is the moment to affirm and re-invest in public education.

Our themes for this year's budget consultation focus on **recovery** and **stability, innovation, truth and reconciliation**, and **inclusiveness** at BC's research universities in 2022.

Summary of Recommendations

Over the course of the last year-and-a-half, faculty have worked above and beyond to support institutions and students in completing their studies, offering both academic and personal support to those struggling as a result of pandemic-related disruptions. All this in spite of significant disruption to our research, teaching, and service supports and structures. Informed by what we have learned from this experience and what is needed to support the **recovery** of the post-secondary education and research sector, the Confederation of University Faculty Associations of British Columbia (CUFA BC) makes the following recommendations.

I. Putting People First at Post-Secondary Institutions

1. **Strategic Investment:** Government has the opportunity to strategically invest in universities at a time when they will best contribute to the economy and society. Commit to sector stability by restructuring the funding model, assert the primacy of public funding to universities and reduce overreliance on precarious employment and international student tuition.
2. **Stability:** Create a stabilization fund to support institutional **recovery** from pandemic disruptions:
 - a. support the human infrastructure of post-secondary institutions, such as the recovery and expansion of faculty personnel to support enrolment demands driven by workforce changes resulting from the pandemic.
 - b. support better health plans and comprehensive mental health initiatives for all campus community members, including faculty.
 - c. address institutions' risk exposure caused by expanded reliance on international student tuition by freezing international student tuition, implementing seat caps, and providing funding to offset the loss of income until the system stabilizes.

II. Supporting Research

3. **Provincial Research Transition Grant:** Create a broad-based provincial research grant open to all disciplines, STEM and non-STEM, to support researchers negatively impacted by Covid-19. Jumpstarting research programmes is necessary. It requires a targeted infusion of resources to support research until grant monies return to normal, personnel are re-hired and trained, labs are reopened and restored, and research collaborations can be rejuvenated.
4. **Offset Currency Exchange:** Provide institutions with supports for essential US-based resources and supplies affected by fluctuating currency exchange rates, such as online textbooks, journals, software, and other licenses, as well as lab supplies and reagents for research and teaching needs.

III. Supporting Truth and Reconciliation, Equity, and Inclusiveness

5. **Internet Access As Essential Service:** Through the lenses of **Truth and Reconciliation** and equity and **inclusion**, invest in province-wide internet access, connectivity, and infrastructure. Based on what Covid-19 has demonstrated, the need to connect online is an essential service, especially for those living in rural and remote communities. We must ensure Indigenous communities, as well as all rural and remote communities, have access to affordable and reliable high-speed internet.

6. **Truth and Reconciliation:** Implement the Calls to Action for the post-secondary education made by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It is an ethical imperative that Government provide ongoing funding to support BC universities and colleges in creating degree and diploma programs in Aboriginal languages (**Call to Action #16**), to hire Indigenous faculty into permanent positions, and to finance research programmes aimed at dismantling systems of racism, discriminations, the criminalization of poverty, and state-sanctioned brutality. Further, work with the federal government and your provincial colleagues to implement the following:
- a. **Call to Action #11:** We call upon the federal government to provide adequate funding to end the backlog of First Nations students seeking a post-secondary education.
 - b. **Call to Action #62(ii):** We call upon the federal, provincial, and territorial governments, in consultation and collaboration with Survivors, Aboriginal peoples, and educators, to provide the necessary funding to post-secondary institutions to educate teachers on how to integrate Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods into classrooms.
 - c. **Call to Action #63:** We call upon the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada to maintain an annual commitment to Aboriginal education issues, including developing learning resources on Aboriginal peoples in Canadian history, and the history and legacy of residential schools.
 - d. **Call to Action #65:** We call upon the federal government, through the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, and in collaboration with Aboriginal peoples, post-secondary institutions and educators, and the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation and its partner institutions, to establish a national research program with multi-year funding to advance understanding of reconciliation.

I. Putting People First at Post-Secondary Institutions

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Strategic Investment:** Government has the opportunity to strategically invest in universities at a time when they will best contribute to the economy and society. Commit to sector stability by restructuring the funding model, asserting the primacy of public funding to universities and concomitantly reduce overreliance on precarious employment and international student tuition.
2. **Stability:** Create a stabilization fund to support institutional recovery from pandemic disruptions:
 - a. support the human infrastructure of post-secondary institutions, such as the recovery and expansion of faculty personnel to support enrolment demands driven by workforce changes resulting from the pandemic.
 - b. support better health plans and comprehensive mental health initiatives for all campus community members, including faculty.
 - c. address institution's risk exposure caused by expanded reliance on international student tuition by freezing international student tuition, implementing seat caps, and providing funding to offset the loss of income until the system stabilizes.

The Government, since coming into power in 2017, has made significant progress in delivering improved health care, education, and childcare to BC residents. One of the great strengths of this government to date has been its commitment to **stable** and predictable funding in the post-secondary sector. We need to continue these efforts and focus on the role research and doctoral universities will serve as catalysts for building a strong, sustainable economy; fostering cultural and social **innovation**; and embodying the commitment to **truth and reconciliation**, equity, and **inclusivity**. It is time to strategically reinvest in universities, enhancing their ability to contribute to the resiliency of our communities and our province.

As the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training undertakes a review of the post-secondary funding model, we ask Government to commit to long-term sector stability by **restructuring the funding model** to prioritize public funding to universities and to concomitantly reduce the overreliance on precarious employment and international student tuition.

In addition to strategically investing in post-secondary education, we also ask that Government **create a stabilization fund** to support institutional **recovery** from pandemic disruptions. ***Putting people first at post-secondary institutions means supporting the human infrastructure of our institutions.*** This includes recovering and expanding the faculty personnel to support enrolment demands and program delivery; cluster hiring from members of equity-seeking groups like Indigenous people and people of colour; and fostering equity and **inclusion** in hiring practices in targeted programs.

A stabilization fund would contribute to supporting health plans and comprehensive mental health initiatives for all campus community members, including faculty. As well, such a fund could be used to reduce the risk exposure institutions face from an overreliance on international student tuition revenue while also supporting international students who are important members of our communities. We call on government and institutions to freeze international student tuition, ensure that current tuition is set at cost recovery and not predatory levels, implement seat caps, and provide funding to offset the loss of income until the system stabilizes.

One of the most pressing priorities for CUFA BC has been the chronic underfunding of post-secondary institutions at the hands of previous governments—a topic we have presented on in the past to this very committee. Global pandemic has brought into sharp relief the unsustainability of the current funding model for post-secondary education. Institutional reliance on private fees has left universities exposed to this massive market and labour disruption that will have long-term implications for the institutions and an entire generation of students.

Previous funding decisions have compounded over decades, resulting in an overreliance on precarious employment and international tuition revenue to meet funding shortfalls. Precarious employment has continued to grow in BC's PSE sector, with important implications for social equality. Equity-seeking groups are greatly overrepresented among precarious faculty. This situation is problematic at the best of times, but particularly pernicious in times of economic instability, when precarious faculty are the first to be laid off or simply not rehired. The differential impact of such decisions on equity-seeking groups should be a policy priority. In the current situation, institutional reliance on international tuition revenue has been exposed as a massive enterprise risk for institutions, as they grappled with uncertain international student enrollment and lost revenue. International students are more important than just the revenues they bring to BC's universities, they also increase the social and cultural diversity on campuses. International students are important citizens within their host communities, often contributing to the local economy and Canada's workforce even after graduation.

Despite these ongoing uncertainties, universities have continued to play a key part in responding to the Covid-19 crisis and keeping on track the province's social, human, and economic development. The crisis presents an opportunity to re-invest in the right ways, including rebalancing the funding model in a manner consistent with socially responsible policy:

- **Stabilize** the sector with sufficient base funding to facilitate **recovery**;
- Support research that fuels **recovery** and **innovation** beyond the academy; and
- Minimize the reliance on precarious employment and international tuition revenue to facilitate equity and **inclusiveness**.

II. Supporting Research

RECOMMENDATIONS

3. **Provincial Research Transition Grant:** Create a broad-based provincial research grant open to STEM and non-STEM disciplines to support researchers negatively impacted by Covid-19. Jumpstarting research programmes is necessary. It requires a targeted infusion of resources to support research until grant monies return to normal, personnel are re-hired and trained, labs are reopened and restored, and research collaborations can be rejuvenated.
4. **Offset Currency Exchange:** Provide institutions with supports for essential US-based resources and supplies affected by fluctuating currency exchange rates, such as online textbooks, journals, software, and other licenses, as well as lab supplies and reagents for research and teaching needs.

The research that takes place at BC's universities address the most pressing social, economic, cultural, and environmental challenges facing British Columbians. Faculty need transitional financial support to jumpstart research programmes after a year-and-a-half of disruption. This summer experienced record

heat waves and fires, the ongoing Covid pandemic response, and the huge impact of income inequality highlight just how important university research—in STEM and social sciences—is a tool to address the core problems society faces.

We recommend creating a [broad-based provincial research transition grant](#) open to all disciplines, STEM and non-STEM, to support researchers negatively impacted by Covid-19. The fund could be administered by the Knowledge Development Fund (KDF) or by individual research institutions.

For some faculty, they were able to pivot their research focus to pandemic-related issues, like developing vaccines, studying pandemic immunology and modelling, as well as trends in labour disruptions, mental health, and public policy effects on people and communities. For others, entire research programmes were put on hold due to inaccessible laboratories on closed campuses, the inability to conduct in-person and community-based research, and the collapse of international systems of research around the globe. In some cases, entire research careers were lost as longitudinal socio-psychological studies were interrupted, and even decades-long biological studies involving generational cell lines were lost.

Professors at CUFA BC's member institutions are obligated to complete research, which constitutes approximately 40% of their workload. Many are struggling to meet their research obligations in the new environment, particularly given that travel is necessary both for conducting the research itself and communicating its results. National tri-council funding has responded in some ways to support research. NSERC generously extended research deadlines last year and provided additional funding for that time. SSHRC and CIHR, however, only granted extensions without funding and CIHR canceled last year's Spring Project Grant competition entirely, hitting health researchers hard.

When grants are drying up and competitions are canceled, bridge funding is necessary. The creation of a broad-based provincial research grant would provide a lifeline until grant monies return to normal, personnel are re-hired and trained like lab techs and student researchers, labs are reopened and restored, and research collaborations can be rejuvenated. Funding shortfalls hit entire research programmes and even graduate students, who are often supported from faculty grants.

Libraries and archives responded to the pressures of remote teaching by offering greater access to online resources throughout the year, offering online access to textbooks, journals, electronic books, and other licenses. The majority of these online resources are based in US dollars. They are exorbitantly costly in a normal year costing hundreds of thousands of dollars and have been more so as institutions enhanced their online repertoire to support research and teaching. Online holdings are not the only things affected by the US exchange rate. Many lab supplies and reagents are purchased from wholesale outlets based in the US, which are costly and necessary for programs.

As the economy fluctuates so too will the exchange rate, making online resources, software, and lab supplies even costlier. Institutions are hard pressed to maintain their online access and stock labs with appropriate supplies to support research and teaching. Institutions will need financial resources to help [recover](#) losses from external market pressures beyond their control.

The demand for online resources and licenses has only increased throughout the year and is expected to increase. We ask Government to provide institutions with the [financial supports to cover the costs of inflation and US currency exchange rate fluctuations](#) to facilitate continued access to essential educational resources.

III. Supporting Truth and Reconciliation, Equity, and Inclusiveness

RECOMMENDATIONS

5. **Internet Access As Essential Service:** Invest in province-wide internet access, connectivity, and infrastructure. Based on what Covid-19 has demonstrated, the need to connect online is an essential service, especially for those living in rural and remote communities. We must ensure Indigenous communities, as well as all rural and remote communities, have access to affordable and reliable high-speed internet.
6. **Truth and Reconciliation:** Implement the Calls to Action for the post-secondary education made by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It is an ethical imperative that Government provide ongoing funding to support BC universities and colleges in creating degree and diploma programs in Aboriginal languages (**Call to Action #16**), to hire Indigenous faculty into permanent positions, and to finance research programmes aimed at dismantling systems of racism, discriminations, the criminalization of poverty, and state-sanctioned brutality. Further, work with the federal government and your provincial colleagues to implement the following:
 - a. **Call to Action #11:** We call upon the federal government to provide adequate funding to end the backlog of First Nations students seeking a post-secondary education
 - b. **Call to Action #62(ii):** We call upon the federal, provincial, and territorial governments, in consultation and collaboration with Survivors, Aboriginal peoples, and educators, to provide the necessary funding to post-secondary institutions to educate teachers on how to integrate Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods into classrooms.
 - c. **Call to Action #63:** We call upon the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada to maintain an annual commitment to Aboriginal education issues, including developing learning resources on Aboriginal peoples in Canadian history, and the history and legacy of residential schools.
 - d. **Call to Action #65:** We call upon the federal government, through the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, and in collaboration with Aboriginal peoples, post-secondary institutions and educators, and the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation and its partner institutions, to establish a national research program with multi-year funding to advance understanding of reconciliation.

Based on what Covid-19 has demonstrated, broadband connectivity has become an essential service for everyone. This is also true for post-secondary education as faculty and students engaged in remote teaching and learning in which internet and mobile wireless access were often the only means of communication. Access to affordable technology and internet services in BC lags behind other Canadian jurisdictions. These challenges are particularly acute for those living in rural and remote communities where access to these services is inconsistent, inequitable, exclusive, and unaffordable.

It is an ethical imperative that Government to **invest in province-wide internet access, connectivity, and infrastructure** to ensure accessibility and equitable access for all, particularly for BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour) and vulnerable communities. We encourage Government to use its

assets effectively to reduce costs and accelerate the expansion of connectivity in rural BC. We must ensure Indigenous communities, as well as all rural and remote communities are not left behind.

There is a greater obligation on institutions of higher education to actively work toward meaningful **truth and reconciliation** through decolonizing and indigenizing the academy. Racism exists on campuses, it results in the underrepresentation of Indigenous people within positions of leadership in our community and on our campuses, and an overrepresentation in precarious employment and experiences of discrimination. We must actively reject racism and work toward true **reconciliation** and **inclusiveness**.

We call on Government and post-secondary institutions to immediately **implement the Calls to Action for the post-secondary education** made by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Implementing these will require ongoing funding to support BC universities and colleges in creating degree and diploma programs in Aboriginal languages (**Call to Action #16**), **hiring Indigenous faculty** into permanent positions, and **financing research** programmes aimed at promoting Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing, and dismantling systems of racism, discriminations, the criminalization of poverty, and state-sanctioned brutality.

Government will also need to work with the federal government and provincial colleagues to provide adequate funding to end the backlog of First Nations students seeking post-secondary education (**Call to Action #11**). Funding to post-secondary institutions is necessary to educate faculty on how to integrate Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods into classrooms (**Call to Action #62(ii)**). The Government must lead the country by setting the priority for provincial Ministers of Education and Advanced Education as delegates to the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada to maintain an annual commitment to Aboriginal education issues, including developing learning resources on Aboriginal peoples in Canadian history, and the history and legacy of residential schools (**Call to Action #63**). Finally, we call on the provincial government to work with the federal government, through the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, and in collaboration with Aboriginal peoples, post-secondary institutions and educators, and the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation and its partner institutions, to establish a national research program with multi-year funding to advance understanding of reconciliation (**Call to Action #65**).

Meaningful **truth and reconciliation** across the province and in post-secondary institutions must be prioritized by Government and supported through the Ministry of Finance. Government and institutions, including faculty, must commit to **including** Indigenous people and resources in higher education, fighting colonial systems of oppression and inequality, and taking a strong role in being allies of change.

Summary

The 2022 provincial budget brings with it the opportunity to do things differently to rebalance our economic and social systems. The quality of education for our fellow citizens is just as important to the development of our society as it is to the economic **recovery**. The advanced education sector needs strategic investment and **stability** through a restructured funding model that puts people first at post-secondary institutions.

The research that takes place at universities contributes to the betterment of British Columbia and its citizens by driving **innovation, recovery**, and transformation of our society. Supporting research directly through a broad-based provincial research grant will ensure research programs can continue to address the most pressing social, economic, cultural, and environmental issues facing British Columbians today. Finally, supporting **truth and reconciliation**, equity, and **inclusiveness** in higher education requires the investment in province-wide internet access, connectivity, and infrastructure. Meaningful **reconciliation** further necessitates the immediate implementation of the Calls to Action for post-secondary education made by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

We have seen universities and colleges across Canada, and especially leaders within BC, stepping up and supporting their communities over the course of the pandemic. With the right investment, universities can continue to play a critical role in educating citizens and increasing global competitiveness, helping BC **recover** from recent social and economic hardships.

Our strategic priorities address Government's core goals of the 2022 budget by catalyzing **innovation, sustainability**, and **inclusiveness**. The Government of British Columbia has an opportunity to shape a forward-thinking agenda for **recovery** in which we believe post-secondary education can play an important role. Now is the time to make investments in post-secondary to help universities continue to fulfill their public mission as generators of high-quality research and education that is invaluable to the public and private sectors of this province. These investments will also meet the needs of a large student body that depends on university education to help them become productive and creative citizens in a diversified and complex knowledge economy.

We thank the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services for meeting with us and hearing our needs for the post-secondary sector from the next budget.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Daniel Laitsch
President
Confederation of University Faculty Associations of BC

Budget Consultation 2022
Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services
Advanced Education Presentation Summaries
August 31, 2021

Summary notes below relied on Hansards notes: <https://www.leg.bc.ca/documents-data/committees-transcripts/20210831am-Finance-Victoria-Blues>. Summaries focused on the CUFA BC member association institutions and allied organizations.

Presentation Panel 1: Advanced Education Institutions – SFU, UBC, UVic

UVic

1. Recommendation to advance leadership in next-generation green building practice, smart cities, building world-leading technology in green hydrogen, wave and tidal energy systems, for example energy storage, and help chart a feasible pathway for the transition of BC to a low carbon economy.
2. Recommendation for the advancement of truth, respect and reconciliation.

UBC

1. Accessibility to post-secondary education and opportunities for all, especially marginalized communities and mid-career learners.
2. Support for innovation, from basic and applied research, continued support of BCKDF, and support for commercialization, entrepreneurship and small businesses.
3. Recommendation to continue building on BC's sectorial strengths, with federal investments in areas such as life sciences and bio-innovation, AI, quantum science and climate research.

SFU

1. Recommendation for capital funding to increase SFU's Surrey campus full time enrolment capacity
2. Recommendation for capital investment into a new interdisciplinary life sciences building on SFU's Burnaby campus
3. Capital funding for the Burnaby Mountain gondola as an alternate, cost-effective, commute effective solution to the bus loop.
4. Recommendation for the continuous funding of the second medical school located on the Surrey Campus thereby improving the public health care system.

Summary of Questions and Discussion

Q: There has been a surge in mental health issues. How is this being addressed?

A: UBC has created a new facility for counselling to meet the need. There is also a 24-hour counsellor in each residence hall to ensure students have support where they reside. A chief mental health officer has also been recruited for this initiative. SFU and RRU have also increased support for mental health and wellness and the operating cost is high therefore funding from government is necessary. Intricately tied to this issue of mental health is career counselling. Students are on edge as they have to worry about whether the courses they take will amount to getting jobs in the future.

Q: For SFU, SFU is seemingly struggling with enrolment capacity, unable to take in more students. Tell us more about this capacity shortage.

A: Depending on the program, as many as 20 to 50 percent of students are being turned away. This is so students who meet the bar are the ones being admitted. With the Surrey Campus, we are constantly looking for where the growing opportunities are for employment, and perhaps with the help of the City of Surrey, we can see to it that the industry is fitted with qualified personnel.

Q: What is staffing like? Are you having problems filling your faculty positions?

A: For SFU, for the most part, are able to recruit highly qualified faculty. The housing market in BC does pose as a barrier to land people. Also, in some fields, like Computer Science, recruitment is competitive, with SFU only able to land 50 percent of the offers made.

Q: For the return to on campus learning, are classes to be on campus or online. What's it looking like for students coming in these next few weeks.

A: Johnson: The Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training has given direction to be fully back on campus this fall therefore, all plans are being made with this directive in mind. There will still be some online classes in an effort to be accommodating particularly to international students.

A: Hall: The government is to be commended for creating the solidarity with the institutions. For UVic, 90 percent of courses will be face to face in September.

A: Ono: With UBC, it's a mixture of SFU and UBC. However, UBC Okanagan faces a different situation due to the large number of cases in the Interior. We are mindful of the anxieties and concerns of the faculty, staff and students.

Q: For SFU, with regards to the 2,900 to 5,000 seat capacity, this is not including the new medical facility coming is it?

A: It would include the seats for the medical program based in Surrey.

Presentation Panel 3: Advanced Education Faculty Associations – CUFA BC, FPSE, RUCBC

FPSE

1. Recommendation for funding to address barriers to access across all demographics, for example, increasing eligibility for the BC access grant program will help reduce barriers and give more people access to skill training need for the workplace.
2. Recommendation for targeted funding to reinstate core programs.
3. Recommendation for improvement for better standard living wages and full time for workers.
4. Recommendation for funding for the Labour Relations Board and BC employment standard branch in terms of resources and staffing to allow for quick response to cases and enforcement of violations.
5. Recommendation to regularly review public employers to ensure compliance with collective agreements and addressing contracting out of services.
6. Reduction or elimination cost of post-secondary for students so they're career pursuits is without the burden of student debt.
7. Funding support for overall system improvements. In particular, BC skilled trades certification program should be fully implemented across the province and for all skilled trades.

RUCBC

1. Government should foster collaboration between post-secondary institutions and the business communities to identify promising business opportunities which build on provincial strength
2. Recommendation to improve student access, support and opportunity especially for non-traditional learners, e.g., Indigenous, immigrants and low-income Canadians.
3. Recommendation for capital investment in digital infrastructure to support B.C. competitiveness in the rapidly changing and threatening global digital environment.
4. Recommendation for investment in research and innovation, especially in graduate studies. Priority should be given to areas like bioproduction, life and natural sciences, green solutions and digital technologies.

Summary of Questions and Discussion

Q: There seems to be a disconnect between post-secondary and employment readiness. There is often need to retrain new graduates. What accounts for the lack of readiness on the graduates' part to make him/her ready for the job?

A: With any job, one can never be perfectly prepared for everything. A little bit of training can always be expected. That said, this gap is why it is increasingly important to work with the business community to understand evolving demands and that we increasingly develop work-integrated learning, e.g., co-op education, workplace placement etc. to enable students to gain hands on experience that is relevant to the workplace.

Q: There is worry that foreign students are contributing to the displacement of domestic students.

A: Foreign students pay the full cost of their education, and they are required to advance the economic prosperity of Canada. It's important to attract international student to come work in both rural and urban centres. Connecting students with their local communities will help keep rural communities vibrant and active. But there is an over-reliance, easily seen during covid, on international students' tuition to make up for funding shortfalls hence it is important to support public education by investing more in public universities.

Q: International students are very important to the economy, so what are the initiatives being taken to support them?

A: Lectures were delivered online to ensure they could continue with their programs of studies.

Presentation Panel 5: Advanced Education Student Organizations – BC Federation of Students

1. Recommend amending the tuition fee limit policy to add a cap on fee increases for international students.
2. Recommend developing strategies that will provide sufficient support for international students to assist in the cultural, social and academic integration.

Q: Can you elaborate on the issue of textbooks?

A: There are costs to online tools that are used to assess knowledge as well as the cost of textbooks, even if they are online.

Q: Can you provide the timeline for increased tuition costs?

A: [at the respondent's institution] Tuition went from \$5,000 to \$8,000 since 2016.

Q: We are told that domestic students are being told there are no seats at institutions and yet we are also told that international students are unable to attend schools because of the pandemic. Why are our domestic students being turned away or are institutions holding seats for international students to return once borders open up?

A: Student groups will find more information and provide supplemental details.

Q: In response to a comment that student access grants need a means test. Who are the people that you see that are getting these grants that should not receive them? And how you suggest redistributing this money?

A: For every dollar spent on tuition, there is a tax credit students receive that can transfer to parents or spouse or keep themselves. We suggest taking the existing tax expenditure that's accounted for in the provincial budget and reinvesting it into the BC access grant program.