



FUNDING

Provincial funding (\$349 million in 2010) for universities was decreased by 10% between 2011 and 2013.2 Even with modest increases of 1% since 2014, funding is substantially beneath the level it should be had those increases continued uninterrupted, resulting in an estimated loss of well over \$40 million in funding for PSE. Universities across the province are struggling, evident in the emergency funding accepted by 4 universities over the last 4 years, and the \$25 million in COVID funding provided in 2021. Sufficient funding would obviate the need to provide occasional slap-dash funding to particular universities in a non-transparent manner.

If you are elected as Premier,

- How will you address the need for better funding for universities and colleges?**

Nova Scotia's post-secondary sector plays a key role in our cultural, social and economic well-being as a province, and like other sectors, it has faced unprecedented challenges due to COVID-19.

This past January the Liberal government announced \$25 million to help Nova Scotia universities manage the impact of the pandemic. We know that all 10 universities faced unexpected financial challenges for 2020-21, including a loss in revenues related to tuition and residence fees. Institutions have also incurred additional COVID-19 related costs around information technology, curriculum development and additional supports for faculty and students, as well as increased cleaning and other costs associated with public health directives.

- Will you restore the 11-year loss of approximately \$40.4 million?**

The Nova Scotia Liberal Party will continue to support post-secondary education in Nova Scotia. Since 2016 the Liberal Governments have increased University every year and have committed to continue to do so through to 2024.

Before the onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic, there was a \$3.7 million increase to the operating grant for universities to train and educate our workforce of the future. On March 19, the Liberal government announced a \$16.8 million investment that will allow four Nova Scotia universities to expand and enhance their computer science programs. To ensure we deepen our talent pool, Dalhousie University, Acadia University, Saint Mary's University and St. Francis Xavier University will each receive funding to increase or enhance their respective computer science programs.

We look forward to open and ongoing dialogue with students, faculty and staff of all post-secondary institutions in Nova Scotia.

• Will you work with the federal government to advocate for a Post Secondary Education Act, as proposed by the Canadian Association of University Teachers?

We are always open to all discussions with students and staff from Nova Scotia universities surrounding the future of Post-Secondary Education in Canada.

TUITION

Domestic undergraduate students in Nova Scotia pay the highest tuition fees in the country. International students pay (on average) 3 times more than Canadian students. Even with financial relief to help Nova Scotia universities during COVID-19, universities have continued to raise tuition fees for students during a global pandemic, when many cannot find employment, face increased housing costs and struggle to complete their studies, at which time they are further penalized by failing to qualify for debt relief programs.

If you are elected as Premier,

• Will you immediately lower tuition fees and commit to elimination of tuition fees for students attending Nova Scotian universities during your term?

The Liberal government is committed to accessible education for Nova Scotians. We recently announced funding for individuals to train or upgrade their training as Early Childhood Educators as part of the largest ever investment in Childcare and Early Learning in Nova Scotia's history. This funding will cover the tuition and books for hundreds of students who want to upgrade.

We also recently announced a \$323,000 increase to the Technology Advantage program that brings together high schools, NSCC, and the IT sector through a partnership with NSCC and IBM. This program will help Nova Scotia students with their transition to University and College programs.

In December 2020, Nova Scotia announced a one-time \$750 COVID-19 Response Grant to all Nova Scotia Student Assistance recipients in 2020-21. Many Nova Scotians have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, including post-secondary students and, in particular, those students with disabilities. That's why we introduced the COVID-19 Accessibility Grant. This grant will help about 3,000 Nova Scotia post-secondary students with permanent disabilities by providing them \$800 in financial assistance.

This government recognizes that students with permanent disabilities have exceptional education-related and equipment requirements. The one-time \$800 grant will help ensure equity

of access to training and other educational opportunities, reflecting the government's commitment to inclusivity and opportunity.

• Will you commit to lowering or eliminating differential fees for international students?

International students add a great deal to Nova Scotia, bringing experience and diversity to our campuses and communities. International student fees and increases are set by individual universities and colleges.

In the past year, the Liberal Government introduced new immigration streams making it easier for international students who graduate from programs in Nova Scotia to apply for permanent residency. The International Graduates in Demand immigration stream started as a pilot program in April. Those hired must be international graduates of eligible programs offered by Nova Scotia's private career colleges and universities or Nova Scotia Community College. Changes to the Occupations in Demand immigration stream announced June 16th, allow employers to hire international newcomers to fill heavy equipment operator and construction trade helper and labourer positions.

Nova Scotia's current immigrant retention rate is 71 per cent, the highest in Atlantic Canada. This speaks to the supports in place for newcomers to our province and we want this number to grow. We know that there is still lots of work to be done to make Nova Scotia the most welcoming and inclusive province it can be.

The number of international graduate approvals in Nova Scotia has increased from 35 in 2014 to 1,018 in 2020, and the office continues to work closely with post-secondary institutions, international students, graduates and stakeholders to keep this upward trend going. We value our international students for all they bring to our schools and communities.

• Will you eliminate interest on all provincial student loans, ultimately replacing all provincial student loans with non-repayable grants?

As of 1 August 2019, the Nova Scotia Loan Forgiveness Program can eliminate all Nova Scotia Student Loan debt for eligible borrowers who study at Nova Scotia universities. Nova Scotia students graduating from Nova Scotia non-professional undergraduate programs may no longer have to repay the provincial portion of their student loans. Graduates can receive 5 years of loan forgiveness, up to \$20,400. This is a significant step forward in reducing the burden on graduates in Nova Scotia.

ANTI-RACISM and RECONCILIATION

The current MOU suggests NS universities establish “shared values and principles around equal opportunity and the education gap among all under-represented communities” including Mi’kmaq and Indigenous, African Nova Scotians and other students of African descent, students with disabilities, and others. Over the past year,

Indigenous and Black-led movements pushed back against racism and colonialism, yet we know that barriers and inequities still exist for students, staff and faculty in these groups. We encourage our next government to actively engage with the university sector in adopting these principles by insisting university administrations negotiate appropriate amendments to collective agreements with faculty, and establishing equitable policies and practices that involve under-represented communities in all aspects of campus life. If you are elected as Premier,

• Will you commit to fulfilling all TRC Calls to Action as they relate to PSE?

Yes. Since 2015, we have worked in partnership with the Mi'kmaq and Canada towards addressing the TRC Calls to Action. This work continues in areas related to justice, socio-economic opportunities, social issues, education and training, culture and heritage, language, and health and wellness.

The work has been done collaboratively with the Mi'kmaq and other Indigenous organizations to ensure meaningful participation in programs, services, and policies and to ensure that these will have positive outcomes for communities, families, and individuals. This work is complex and requires a long-term commitment from the government and Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities.

We will continue to work to raise awareness about the TRC Calls to Action and implement and coordinate provincial initiatives that respond to these Calls.

Reconciliation is a long-term journey that will take generations to complete.

• Will you amend the current MOU to include clauses that incorporate principles from the CAUT Policy Statement on Indigenizing the Academy?

We are open to continued dialogue on the incorporation of Indigenizing all aspects of our society. This is a part of reconciliation. We are committed to further incorporating and highlighting L'nu knowledge, and the culture and traditions of Mi'kmaw people through principles of First Voice.

The Rankin government provided \$150,000 in annual funding for five years for a new Mi'kmaw Chair in Healthy L'nu Communities at Cape Breton University. This new position was created to incorporate and gather L'nu knowledge to improve the health outcomes of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaw. It will be a community-based model for health research and practice and is a collaboration among Nova Scotia's Mi'kmaw communities, Tajikeyimik (Mi'kmaw Health & Wellness), the Department of Health and Wellness, the Nova Scotia Health Authority, IWK Health Centre and other partners.

The 2021-22 budget included a \$723,000 increase for Unama'ki Pathways in Technology, Early College High School (PTECH), an integrated partnership program for Mi'kmaq students focusing on science and technology, engineering, and math (STEM) and developing workplace skills.

Treaty Education Nova Scotia, a partnership between the Province and Mi'kmaq, is developing programs and services for the education system, provincial civil service, and all Nova Scotians to highlight the contributions of the Mi'kmaq. These resources will help explain the importance of Treaties and how they are significant building blocks for Nova Scotia and Canada and how we have all benefited from them.

COMMERCIALIZATION

New and emerging opportunities, innovation and collaboration, entrepreneurship training, fostering partnerships, institutional outcome agreements (including sector specific outcomes), and economic priorities of the province are a few of the terms listed throughout the current MOU that focus priority on fostering collaborations with the private sector. As reliance on corporate donations at universities across Canada continues to rise (from 2.7% of university operating revenue in 1985, to 10% in 2015), it's important to remember that, although benefits can be achieved from partnerships of this nature, the SSFA is concerned that the current MOU does not protect the core academic principles of academic freedom and research.

If you are elected Premier,

• How will you balance the issue of commercialization at NS universities and colleges with the principles of academic freedom and research?

The Nova Scotia Liberal Party agrees with the principles of institutional autonomy as described by Universities Canada; we respect the institutional autonomy that ensures universities in Nova Scotia are free to pursue enquiry and disseminate knowledge based on evidence, truth and peer review. We will continue to encourage and value the collaborative roles that industry has played in preparing students for jobs in various sectors in Nova Scotia's diverse economy and the research and innovation that has come through partnerships that advance the fields of medicine, the environment, safety, agriculture and marine sciences, to name but a few.

We expect the private sector to respect the guidelines and policies that universities have in place to protect undue influence in scholarship and academia. We look forward further to positive advancements made through partnerships between universities, private industry and provincial investment while respecting principles of academic freedom.