



July 29, 2021

SSFA

Students, Staff, and Faculty Alliance

VIA EMAIL: teresa.workman@ansut.ca

I am pleased to respond to our questionnaire as follows:

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?

Our focus is to increase our student population and retention rates so that Nova Scotia becomes a competitive place for growth. That is why we have put forward two comprehensive solutions to make life more affordable for our students in the key areas of skilled trades and continuing care assistants that are listed below.

For those in the skilled trades in Nova Scotia, no provincial income tax will be paid by those under 30 on the first \$50,000 of income. This will give those in the skilled trades an additional \$4,500 per year and a head start in paying off their debt, saving up for a house, or investing in their future.

In terms of our CCAs, we need 1,400 new graduates to fill our growing need. To help them get a strong financial start in life and to acknowledge the critical work that they do, we will give a 50% bursary towards a CCAs tuition upon graduation. This will allow CCAs, just as our skilled trades workers, to be acknowledged for their critical input into Nova Scotia and give them the head start in life that they deserve.

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

The availability of funds will be tight all around with our healthcare system in crisis. The funding of universities and colleges will need to be reviewed before any commitments can be made. As previously stated, our commitments so far are to increase Nova Scotia's student population and retention rates.

- **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 would appreciate it if you could provide a copy of this Legislation for us to review please. Thank you.

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?**

Our province is in a health care crisis. Our need to invest money into healthcare immediately has never been higher in order to make up for the shortcomings of the previous government. This is to ensure that people are getting primary care services and that our health systems are not suffering from a dangerous shortage of staff that contributes to the consistent chronic burnout and stress of health professionals.

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

The costs of our world-renowned post-secondary institutions need to be competitive and attractive for our students and people setting up to work and live in Nova Scotia. Upon forming the government, a review of how these fees are balanced and the impact they have will be conducted.

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

Since March of 2014, the provincial government has been offering 0% for students. Information can be found here: https://novascotia.ca/studentassistance/financing/Zero_Interest.asp

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?**

We will partner with our federal government to move these actions forward. We will pursue the TRC Calls to Action under provincial jurisdiction, and listen to local indigenous leaders and voices to understand how they can best be implemented. We encourage the federal government to provide credible action on the TRC Calls to Action, and we commit to collaboration with them as we move towards reconciliation.

- **Will you amend the current MOU to include clauses that incorporate principles from the [CAUT Policy Statement on Indigenizing the Academy](#)?**

The incorporation of these principles into the MOU will require a full review and discussions upon forming the government.

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. (3)

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 path forward of recovering from COVID-19 is still uncertain, especially financially. A PC government will always ensure that the integrity of our learning institutions is a top priority in order to promote diversity and freedom in speech and thought.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tara Miller', with a long, sweeping underline.

Tara Miller
Campaign Co-Chair
PC Party of Nova Scotia