



Recommendations for the **2022 Federal Budget**

**WRITTEN SUBMISSION FOR THE PRE-BUDGET CONSULTATIONS IN ADVANCE OF THE
2022 FEDERAL BUDGET**

The Thompson Rivers Students' Union (TRUSU) is a membership-based organization of more than 10,000 students at Thompson Rivers University (TRU) located in Kamloops, B.C., Canada.

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2022 FEDERAL BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS

01.

Continue To Expand the Canada Summer Jobs Program

02.

Create A Comprehensive International Student Plan

03.

Host A Federal Inquiry Into Residential Schools

04.

Create A National Housing Strategy For Young Canadians

INTRODUCTION

The past two years have been an unusually challenging time for Canadians on many levels. The Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) has disrupted the global economy and we are now facing new health and social challenges in unprecedented ways. Restarting the Canadian economy while ensuring that vulnerable people are not left behind will be of the highest importance in the coming months and years.

The post-secondary sector has a key role in this recovery process as there will be a significant portion of the population seeking retraining, as well as current students who are looking to complete their education during these times of economic uncertainty.

Our recommendations on behalf of our members for the 2022 budget go beyond post-secondary education though. There are key issues in Canada that our members want to see the federal government address, in particular, around reconciliation for Indigenous peoples. Issues that our members care about go far beyond the classroom our recommendations to the federal government reflects this.

STUDENT FEEDBACK

01.

Continue To Expand the Canada Summer Jobs Program

We asked students at Thompson Rivers University (TRU) to reflect on their experiences during the year of 2020. This is what some students shared with us regarding their job experiences.

“I was laid off from my job for half the year. I always work part-time throughout the school year so not having work has been a huge stressor for me financially.”

“Without a doubt, finances are what mainly preoccupy my thoughts while I pursue my studies. Having lost three jobs at once due to the pandemic, I do worry about being able to continue to meet my financial obligations (rent, utilities, credit card debt, etc.) while I resume my studies.”

“I lost my job beginning of March and it has truly been hard living without work for so long.”

The Canada Summer Jobs program has been a longstanding federal program to provide students with paid work experience. Specifically, the program aims to “provide quality work experiences for youth, respond to national and local priorities to improve access to labour market for youth who face unique barriers, and to provide opportunities for youth to develop and improve their skills.”^[i] In 2019 the program shifted to be open to all Canadian youths, but it still primarily provides student jobs.

We believe this recommendation is important because the COVID-19 pandemic is proving particularly challenging for young people and new graduates. As of January, 15-24- year-olds have accounted for 45 per cent of net employment losses since the onset of the pandemic. And young people still face much higher unemployment rates than pre-pandemic — 10.4 per cent in January 2020 compared to 19.7 per cent in January 2021.^[ii]

This shows the vulnerability that students and young people are facing. As stated by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, “In this economic climate it is hard for people of all ages to find work, but young people are especially vulnerable. They are new to the workforce so they don’t have a lot of money set aside for this kind of situation. At the same time, they need work experience to secure their next job and money to cover their living expenses and help with tuition for the rest of their year.”^[iii]

The federal government has continued to expand the Canada Summer Jobs Program since the onset of the pandemic, with an additional 30,600 job placements for the 2021-22 year.^[iv] We applaud this continued expansion of this vital program to provide Canadian youth with employment and skill development.

Looking to the 2022 federal budget, we recommend a continued expansion of this program. With the additional unique barriers that many youth face to finding employment, this program will be more important than ever in the years ahead. If the Canada Summer Jobs Program is further expanded, it could become a key part of the federal government’s strategy to restart the Canadian economy in the coming years.

STUDENT FEEDBACK

02.

We asked students at TRU to reflect on their experiences during the year of 2020. This is what some international students shared with us regarding their experiences.

"The biggest challenge I faced was studying online in virtual classes. I got my visa last year in March and was super excited to join TRU in September. Unfortunately, due to the lockdown I had to cancel all my plans of moving to Canada, since I live in India, I had to come to the realization that my dreams of moving to Canada will have to wait for some time more."

"Covid 19 definitely brought financial problems and with the fees not decreasing and jobs vanishing it become extremely difficult for an international student to survive."

Create A Comprehensive International Student Plan

The international education sector has been a rapidly growing part of the Canadian economy over the past decade. As of 2019, there were 640,000 international students studying across the country, representing an increase of 68 per cent since 2014.^[vi] This has pushed Canada to being ranked third globally in the number of international students we attract, behind only the United States of America and Australia.^[vi]

The estimated economic impact of international students studying in Canada was \$21.6 billion in 2018 alone. In addition to this, international education helps to sustain an estimated 170,000 jobs across the country, which is particularly important in our current global context.^[vii] This represents a significant part of the Canadian economy and, within the post-secondary sector, a very important revenue source.

However, the future of international student enrolment is increasingly uncertain in the context of COVID-19. Post-secondary institutions across the country have dealt with a 17 per cent decline in international student enrolment in 2020, from a high of 640,000 students in 2019 down to 530,000 students in 2020. Students themselves have struggled to navigate quickly changing regulations, timelines, and costs throughout the pandemic and these issues are likely to continue looking forward.

It is not only international students themselves who are struggling to navigate the changing international landscape. Many post-secondary education institutions are heavily reliant on tuition dollars from international students to maintain balanced budgets, and without clear direction from the federal government are continue to face campus-wide uncertainty about the future.

The federal government has recognized the growing importance of this sector through releasing a five-year international student strategy in 2019 that will carry through to 2024. This strategy is almost entirely growth focused though, and lacks critical details that could help the post-secondary sector respond and make reforms in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We believe that the federal government should start the process of revising the existing international education strategy to account for the new reality and challenges that are being faced in this sector. It is unlikely that international education will see the same level of mobility that the existing strategy is based on and both students and institutions need reassurance about how the federal government plans to move forward in the coming years.

03.

Host A Federal Inquiry Into Residential Schools

The federal government under Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has made significant commitments to Indigenous peoples under the banner of reconciliation. These commitments, while remaining incomplete, have included ending boil water advisories on all reservations, establishing a National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, implementing the calls to action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and many other areas.^[viii]

One area of reconciliation that the federal government has not taken sufficient action on is addressing the atrocities committed against students and families within the Indian Residential School (IRSS) System. As the entire country quickly became aware of in May of 2021, the bodies of 215 children were found buried on the grounds of the former Kamloops Residential School. This grave site is expected to be only the first of many similar discoveries across the country.

Recent polling data has showed that despite 93 per cent% of Canadians being aware of this discovery, only 10 per cent of Canadians are very familiar with history of the IRSS.^[ix] The former industrial Kamloops Indian Residential School (KIRS) is located in the unceded Stk'emlupsemc Te Secwepemc Nation where our students' union members live and study, and as such they have a direct interest in seeing the federal government take action on this issue.

On behalf of our members, we are recommending that the federal government host a national inquiry into residential schools. The history of the Indian Residential School System, and ongoing legacy of that system, need to be independently investigated for this country to better understand how to move forward with reconciliation.

04.

Create A National Housing Strategy For Young Canadians

In November 2017, the federal government announced Canada's first National Housing Strategy. This plan included a pledge to invest \$40 billion over the next 10 years, build 100,000 new affordable units, repair 300,000 affordable unites, and to cut homelessness by 50 per cent.^[x]

Despite this ambitious strategy, housing issues seem to have only become worse over the past four years. Housing prices have continued to increase rapidly, putting the opportunity to own a home out of reach for many Canadians. This, in turn, has been part of driving rental costs up year over year in many parts of the country. Homelessness is harder to quantify as improving or getting worse, but by all accounts, it certainly does not seem any closer to being solved.

There are many groups of people who face specific housing challenges, with some having their needs reflected in the national housing strategy and some who don't. Young Canadians, which includes many students and recent graduates, represent an entire generation of people in Canada who don't currently see themselves substantially reflected in the current housing strategy.

The current strategy includes some limited measures that may help young Canadians find housing, such as the First Time Home Buyers Credit, but we believe that in the current housing crisis further action is necessary from the federal government.

On behalf of our members, we are recommending that the federal government update their housing strategy to include a national housing strategy specific to young Canadians.

Endnotes

- ^[i] Employment and Social Development Canada. Funding: Canada Summer Jobs – Overview. <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/funding/canada-summer-jobs.html>
- ^[ii] Statistics Canada. COVID-19 in Canada: A One-year Update on Social and Economic Impacts. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-631-x/11-631-x2021001-eng.htm#a4>
- ^[iii] The Gateway. April 2020. Prime Minister amends Canada Summer Jobs Program to employ more students. <https://thegatewayonline.ca/2020/04/prime-minister-amends-canada-summer-jobs-program-to-employ-more-students/>
- ^[iv] Newswire. April 28, 2021. Record number of Canada Summer Jobs now available for young Canadians. <https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/record-number-of-canada-summer-jobs-now-available-for-young-canadians-875217311.html>
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- ^[viii] Government of Canada. Reconciliation. <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1400782178444/1529183710887>
- ^[ix] Canadian Race Relations Foundation. June 15, 2021. How do Canadians Feel About Residential Schools?: A Poll. <https://www.crrf-fcrr.ca/en/news-a-events/articles/item/27400-canadians-react-to-the-discovery-of-remains-at-residential-schools>
- ^[x] Government of Canada. 2017. A Place to Call Home. <https://www.placetocallhome.ca>