



# ***ACCESS FOR ALL***

## **Problem Statement**

The federal government must take immediate action to preserve and enhance our world-class post-secondary education system.

## **Problem Description**

The federal government's innovation strategy established the highly laudable goal of ensuring all Canadians have access to high-quality PSE. However, the government's current practice of unconditionally transferring money to the provinces for PSE is just that. It is not social policy. The government of Canada is not living up to its Social Union Framework Agreement (SUFA) commitments to PSE to ensure access for all Canadians and to engage and inform the public. Building on success, our objective must be to make Canadians the most highly educated and productive citizens in the world.

## **Impact**

Effective April 1, 2004, the Canada Health and Social Transfer (CHST) will be split into the Canada Health Transfer (CHT) and the Canada Social Transfer (CST)<sup>1</sup>. In contrast to the robust public debate on health care, there has been no discussion of the CST and the implications for post-secondary education (PSE). *The division of the CHST provides a valuable opportunity to rejuvenate the federal role in Canada's post-secondary education system.*

## **Solutions**

### ***Establish a Canada Education Transfer***

Provincial fiscal needs for social assistance, health care and post-secondary education are different and require separate funding mechanisms. To ensure transparency, visibility, accountability, national standards, and adequate funding, the federal government should establish a dedicated transfer for post-secondary education with an appropriate funding escalator.

### ***Establish a Canada Education Act***

The federal government should return to its 1981 commitment to introduce legislation for PSE. A Canada Education Act (CEA) would outline principles of accessibility, quality, accountability and portability. Similar to the Canada Health Act, it would reflect Canadian values, provide the conditions for federal funding of post-secondary education, and ensure that access to post-secondary education remains a public good.

### ***Establish a PSE Dispute Resolution Mechanism***

A dispute resolution mechanism as outlined in section 6 of SUFA would give the federal government recourse to challenge violations of the CEA. It would also be attractive to the provinces, especially in the areas of federal spending power and the interpretation of national standards.

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<sup>1</sup> The Budget Plan 2003



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## ***Establish a Post-Secondary Education Council of Canada***

Based on the Health Council of Canada, a PSE Council of Canada should be established by the provincial, territorial and federal governments to measure the performance of the post-secondary education system, ensure access, co-ordinate efforts, collect information, provide advice, support the Canada Education Act and report publicly to ensure Canada has the best possible PSE system.

## ***Examine innovative PSE funding mechanisms***

### Graduate Tax

Replace tuition with a post-graduate tax. Graduates would pay a fixed percentage of after-graduation income (based on an analysis of average graduate incomes) for a fixed number of years. This amount would be collected by CCRA, ring fenced and distributed back to the provincial governments for spending on PSE. Money would go to the province in which a graduate studied. As a fixed percentage, the amount given by each graduate would be commensurate with how much value they got out of their education. Provisions would be made for students who either leave the country or do not find employment after graduation. While this would require an increased investment of federal and provincial dollars to PSE when the system is first implemented, over the long term it would become increasingly efficient and require a progressively decreased financial commitment.

### Graduate Export Tax

To encourage a sense of responsibility to society, Canadian graduates who move outside the country to work would be responsible for paying back the tax-payer funded portion of their education. A scaled payback mechanism would be developed to accommodate both those who spend a limited time abroad and return home, and those who stay in Canada before leaving.

### Education Portability

Under the CHA, Canadians who incur health costs covered by the Act while traveling outside of the country are reimbursed. Under a CEA, Canadians who study abroad and commit to returning to Canada for a minimum period should be eligible for federal financial assistance. It is discriminatory to require students to attend Canadian institutions to be eligible for programs such as the Millennium Scholarships and Canada Graduate Scholarships in the absence of a separate program to support Canadians studying abroad.

### Athletic Scholarships

The ban on athletic scholarships should be lifted to generate the following positive consequences: allow young Canadians the option to develop their athletic talents domestically; increase the vibrancy and diversity of Canadian campuses through more competitive and popularized sporting cultures; nurture amateur sport in Canada and create better conditions for world-class performance at the Olympic and professional level; and provide a supportive policy response to a traditionally underrepresented component of Canadian youth (the athlete), in concert with the stronger academics-focused and R&D supporting measures.



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## ***Examine new initiatives***

### Nation-Building Corps

Recent international events suggest that modern countries must have a dual combat and nation-building capacity. The federal government should establish a Nation-Building Corps (NBC) that would provide human resources to assist developing countries in their process of economic and social development. The NBC would be comprised of conscripts between the ages of 19-25 who are enrolled in a Canadian post-secondary institution. Members of the NBC would spend one four-month assignment working in their area of interest in a developing country of their choice.

### Internships

There are very few internship opportunities in Canada. The lack of appropriate work experience following graduation is a barrier for many students. Individual colleges and universities should be funded to: advertise their potential students; determine appropriate internships; match employers and employees; and monitor the students' work experience. Internships should be given to students based on academic merit and financial need and students could be paid a co-op salary by the employer.

### Transform the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC)

SSHRC should be restructured along the lines of multidisciplinary parallel 'academies' such as Public Policy, Fine Arts, and Social and Cultural Theory, each overseen by broad-based panels of renowned Canadian researchers. Strategic initiatives championed by the academies would allow for a better response to issues of topical importance, but must be balanced with traditional and vital investigator-driven 'open competitions'. If accompanied by sustained and increased funding, this would transform SSHRC from a passive granting council to a proactive research agency.

## **Immediate Actions**

In anticipation of the April 1, 2004 CHT/CST deadline and consistent with the Social Union Framework Agreement's commitment to consult and provide advance notice prior to implementing a major change in social policy, the federal government should immediately call a federal/provincial/territorial meeting to begin negotiations on renewing post-secondary education. As outlined in SUFA, some of the proposals described above would require the agreement of a majority of provincial governments; others could be implemented unilaterally. The federal government should also ensure the participation of Canadians in developing the new programs.