

February 18, 2020

BACKGROUND

The new BC Access Grant

To support low- to middle-income post-secondary students when they need it most, *Budget 2020* takes the next step in making life more affordable for B.C. students. Building on the elimination of interest on B.C. student loans, a new needs-based, up-front BC Access Grant will remove barriers to education and provide support for learners to complete their studies.

In time for the 2020 fall semester, more than 40,000 eligible students at public colleges and universities throughout the province will receive immediate support with the up-front costs of their education.

The BC Access Grant complements the Canada Student Grant for Full-time Students, ensuring B.C. students receive up to \$4,000 a year to help with the cost of programs leading to a degree, diploma or certificate.

Program length	BC Access Grant	Canada Student Grant for Full-time Students	Total
Under 2 years	Up to \$4,000 a year	N/A	Up to \$4,000 a year
2 years and over	Up to \$1,000 a year	Up to \$3,000 a year	Up to \$4,000 a year

The grant design reflects best practices and research that needs-based, up-front grants not only improve access to education, but also encourage completion by making life more affordable for students as they begin post-secondary studies at the start of each school year.

The new grant is created with a new \$24 million investment over three years, and by re-designing existing grant programs based on input from B.C. student advocates. This is in addition to approximately \$37 million government is reinvesting from grants to ensure students get the help they need when they need it most. This means that almost double the number of students will receive support.

The BC Access Grant program continues important support for labour market priorities, modernizes student financial aid and is flexible to meet high-demand occupations, such as early childhood educators, health care assistants and trades workers. This is the first time that provincial grants will be available to part-time students and students in programs of less than two years in a much broader range of programs.

The BC Access Grant program builds on the B.C. government's work to make life better and more affordable for people, including historic investments and policy changes in the post-secondary sector:

Opening doors to post-secondary education and training:

- Launching the Provincial Tuition Waiver Program for former youth in care to access free tuition at all 25 public post-secondary institutions. To date, more than 1,100 former youth in care have benefited.
- Eliminating interest on B.C. student loans, saving a typical student who graduates with about \$28,000 in combined B.C. and federal student loans \$2,300 in interest charges over a 10-year repayment period.
- Reducing the cost of education by investing more than \$3 million in open textbooks — the province's largest investment.
- Creating B.C.'s first graduate scholarship fund with a \$12 million investment — the largest investment in graduate scholarships in the province's history.

Supporting safe and state-of-the-art learning environments:

- Making housing more accessible and affordable for students by investing \$450 million to build approximately 5,000 new beds over six years, with 1,975 new beds funded to date.
- Opening 11 new and improved trades, health care and engineering training facilities in partnership with the federal government and post-secondary institutions throughout B.C.
- Developing a new, 24/7, free mental health helpline for students at all public and private post-secondary institutions throughout B.C.
- Investing \$750,000 in sexual violence prevention programs at post-secondary institutions.

Investing in the jobs of today and tomorrow:

- Providing \$42 million annually by 2022/23 to add 2,900 tech spaces for a range of technology programming at public post-secondary institutions throughout B.C.
- Investing approximately \$30 million overall to expand co-op and work-integrated learning in each of B.C.'s 25 public post-secondary institutions.
- Negotiating a new Workforce Development Agreement with the Government of Canada, providing \$685 million over six years to train and improve the skills of 67,000 British Columbians.
 - Investments to date include \$12.4 million to help more than 2,000 women, youth and other under-represented groups access skilled trades training, and \$7.5 million for trades training for nearly 500 people in Indigenous communities

- Addressing workforce needs in health care and early childhood education by:
 - investing in the first sonography program outside the Lower Mainland, at College of New Caledonia in Prince George, as well as Vancouver Island's first sonography program at Camosun College,
 - expanding occupational and physical therapy spaces, and creating the first programs in the North,
 - creating the first nursing degree program in the northeast in Fort St. John,
 - adding 314 early childhood education spaces at 12 post-secondary institutions as part of a three-year, \$7.4 million investment.
- Investing in trades training including:
 - \$12.4 million to help more than 2,000 women, youth and other under-represented groups access skilled trades training.
 - \$7.5 million for trades training for nearly 500 people in Indigenous communities throughout B.C.
 - \$3.5 million to increase the number of apprentice advisors to increase support for both apprentices and employers.

Quick Facts:

- 77% of all job openings over the next 10 years will require post-secondary education and training — 41% will require a certificate or diploma and 36% will require an undergraduate or master's degree.
- Starting in September 2020, eligible students applying for student financial assistance from StudentAid BC will be automatically assessed for the BC Access Grant — no need for students to apply separately.
- Grant funding can be used toward tuition costs, but it can also be used for basic living expenses, such as the cost of rent, groceries or transit.
- The new BC Access Grant follows best practices, bringing B.C. in line with other Canadian jurisdictions that provide up-front, needs-based grants.
- The BC Access Grant supports the commitment in the Confidence and Supply Agreement with BC Green Party caucus to improve access and reduce the cost of post-secondary education for students.

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