



simon fraser
student society

THE SFSS ADVOCACY COMMITTEE

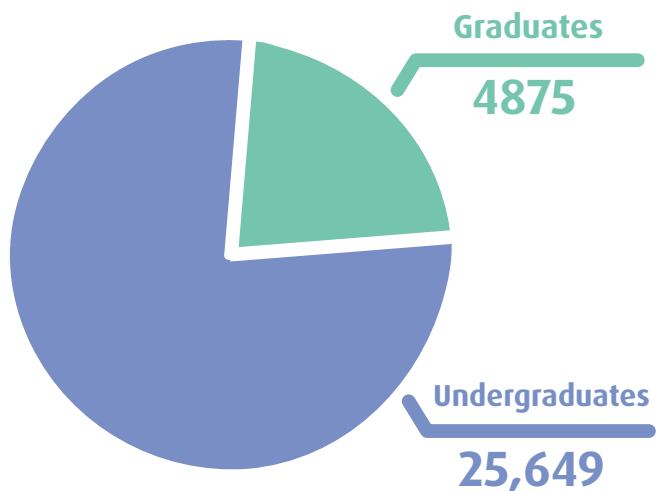
Recommendations to the
Government of Canada

April 11th & 12th, 2019 | Ottawa, ON

Introduction

WHO WE ARE

The Simon Fraser Student Society (SFSS) represents over 25,000 undergraduate students attending Simon Fraser University (SFU), which spans three main campuses in Burnaby, Surrey, and Vancouver in beautiful British Columbia. The SFSS is governed by a student Board of Directors and employs both full-time and part-time staff to support operations. The Advocacy Committee (AC) of the SFSS supports member interests and advocates on their behalf.



\$9,869 / term

the cost of living for an undergraduate student living on residence with a meal plan

WHAT WE DO

The SFSS exists to improve the health and wellbeing, academic conditions, social experience, and financial conditions of our members. The SFSS Board of Directors determines SFU undergraduate students' top priorities through two annual surveys, the General Membership Survey and the Advocacy Survey. Some of our accomplishments in the 2018/2019 year are:

- successfully lobbying the provincial government to eliminate interest on the provincial portion of student loans, saving graduates an estimated \$22 million in 2019/2020;
- advising the provincial government on the housing affordability issues faced by SFU students, resulting in \$450 million being allocated towards building more on-campus student housing in BC; and
- establishing a strong relationship with other student societies in BC to form a coalition that represents over 200,000 students.

Accessibility in Post-Secondary Institutions

BACKGROUND

The Government of Canada introduced Bill C-81: the Accessible Canada Act in June 2018, in order to improve accessibility for persons with disabilities in areas under federal authority. This Act would introduce provisions to identify, remove and prevent barriers to citizens' full participation in Canadian society. Additionally, the Optional Protocol to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was acceded by the government in December 2018. These steps have the ability to improve the lives of the more than six million Canadians over the age of 15 that identify as having a disability; however, the measures will not apply to post-secondary institutions.

The province of BC has more than 600,000 people over the age of 15 with disabilities (roughly 15% of the population). Despite this fact, Bill M 219: the British Columbia Accessibility Act, which aims to prevent and remove accessibility barriers, has not yet received Royal Assent. Furthermore, it is unclear what regulations will be created under this Act. Though BC's Budget 2019 incorporated many commitments to improving life for persons with disabilities, such as increasing disability and income assistance rates, there are still many changes needed to realize true accessibility in the province.

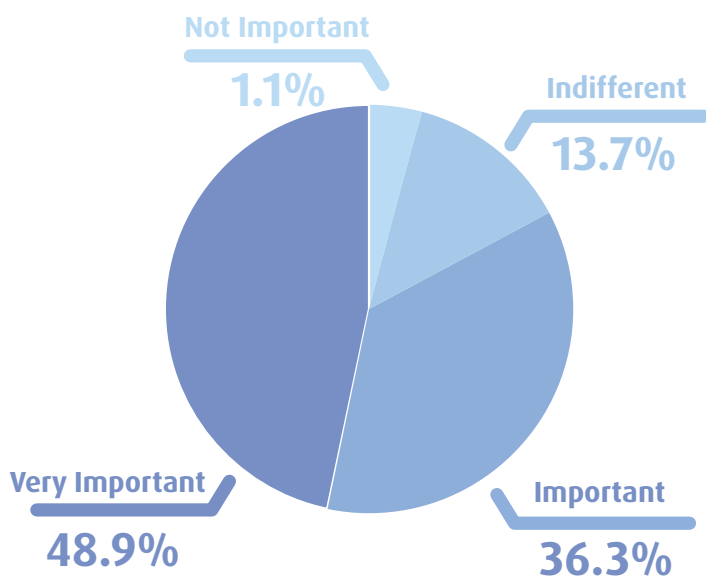
According to a July 2018 National Educational Association of Disabled Students (NEADS) report, few academic institutions across Canada have policies that promote awareness and acceptance of disabilities issues and persons. The report highlights the concern with the current "accommodation model" in which students with disabilities must self-advocate and disclose their needs in order to have accommodations made for them. Rejecting the accommodation model in favour of principles of inclusion and universal design benefit all students with accessibility needs.

Accessibility in Post-Secondary Institutions

RATIONALE

As BC currently has no comprehensive legislation requiring the removal of accessibility barriers to programs and service delivery, employment, the built environment, information and communications technology, procurement, and transportation, our province will rely on the Accessible Canada Act for industries under federal jurisdiction. As such, post-secondary institutions are not covered currently and will not be covered by federal legislation. According to the SFSS Advocacy Survey 2019, having accessible spaces on campus is important or very important to 85.2% of SFU undergraduates.

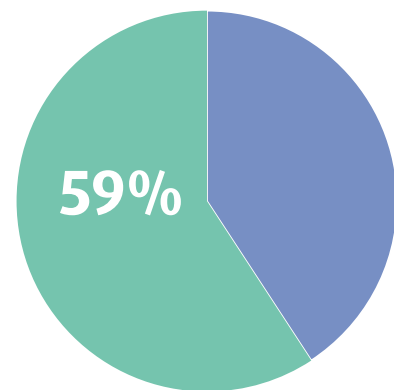
Importance of Accessible Spaces:



The SFSS looks to Ontario's Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA), as a best practice, and supports the recommendations of the 2018 NEADS report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Introduce policies and guidelines based on credible research to promote accessibility across Canada, particularly at post-secondary institutions, in advance of provincial legislation and regulation. Ensure harmonization with existing provincial regulations like the AODA and industry standards.
- Increase funding opportunities such as the Enabling Accessibility Fund (EAF) to support post-secondary institutions undertaking capital projects intent on improving accessibility.



59% of complaints filed to the Canadian Human Rights Commission were disability claims in 2017

Burnaby Mountain Tank Farm Safety Plan

BACKGROUND

SFU Burnaby Campus is located on Burnaby Mountain. The Burnaby Terminal, the terminus of the Trans Mountain pipeline often referred to as the Burnaby Mountain tank farm, is located a mere 700 metres from our campus. The Trans Mountain Expansion Project, a twinning of the existing line from Edmonton to Burnaby, and the related tripling of capacity at the tank farm and the nearby Westridge Marine Terminal, could have a large impact on SFSS members. In May 2018, the National Energy Board (NEB) approved the condition to allow the proponent Trans Mountain to wait to submit an evacuation plan to the NEB until six months before the pipeline begins operation. Additionally, the Canadian Standards Association (CSA), the standards body responsible for ensuring the compliance of the Trans Mountain pipeline, does not include performance standard for seismic design in their CSA Standard Z662 Oil and Gas Pipeline Systems. The lack of measures to protect those that live, work and attend school on the mountain create a large safety risk.

MP Burnaby North-Seymour MP Terry Beech has recently proposed municipal re-zoning of the land the tank farm occupies to multiple family residential. Feasibility studies would need to be conducted to ensure the viability of this option. Concurrently, SFU is working with TransLink, Metro Vancouver's regional transit operator, to develop the Burnaby Mountain Gondola Transit project. As per a 2018 Feasibility Study prepared for TransLink, the proposed gondola could move students quicker and more safely up the mountain with a lower environmental impact than the current fleet of diesel buses. Additionally, the gondola could provide a safe evacuation route in the event of an incident at the tank farm that could cut off egress routes to the base of the mountain.

Burnaby Mountain Tank Farm Safety Plan

1

May-November

2016

May: The National Energy Board (NEB) recommends the approval of the Trans Mountain Expansion project (the Project) with 157 conditions to the Governor in Council. The Project has received considerable backlash due to, among other things, the absence of a publicly-released evacuation plan for those living, studying, and working in and around Burnaby Mountain.

November: The Governor in Council directs the NEB to issue construction permits, allowing the Project to move forward.

2

March

2017

Trans Mountain addresses significant safety concerns as required by the NEB's conditions of approval; however, the NEB maintains that evacuation plans are not necessary until six months before the Trans Mountain pipeline begins operations.

3

May

2018

The federal government purchases the Trans Mountain pipeline to ensure that the pipeline and related infrastructure will be built.

4

August

2018

The Governor in Council directs the NEB to undertake a Reconsideration of the Project, quashing the construction permit. The decision regarding the evacuation plan is not part of this Reconsideration. The NEB's Reconsideration report recommends proceeding with the Project despite significant environmental effects.

RATIONALE

One of the greatest concerns of the SFU community and wider North Burnaby community, as communicated to MP Terry Beech, is the lack of an evacuation plan in the event of an incident at the tank farm that has the potential to cause spills, chemical leakages, boilover or explosion on Burnaby Mountain. The SFSS is also concerned with the lack of standards for pipeline reinforcement to address potential seismic activity that could result in spills, chemical exposure or large-scale environmental destruction. The SFSS supports SFU's Burnaby Mountain Gondola Transit proposal, and a proposal from MP Terry Beech to re-zone the tank farm location to multiple family residential to remove the safety risks from Burnaby Mountain.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Advocate for the Burnaby Mountain Gondola and re-zoning of the Burnaby Terminal area to regional and municipal governments.
- Encourage the NEB to reconsider the decision to allow Trans Mountain to proceed with construction without an approved evacuation plan.
- Mandate the Canadian Standards Association to develop seismic safety standards for pipelines.

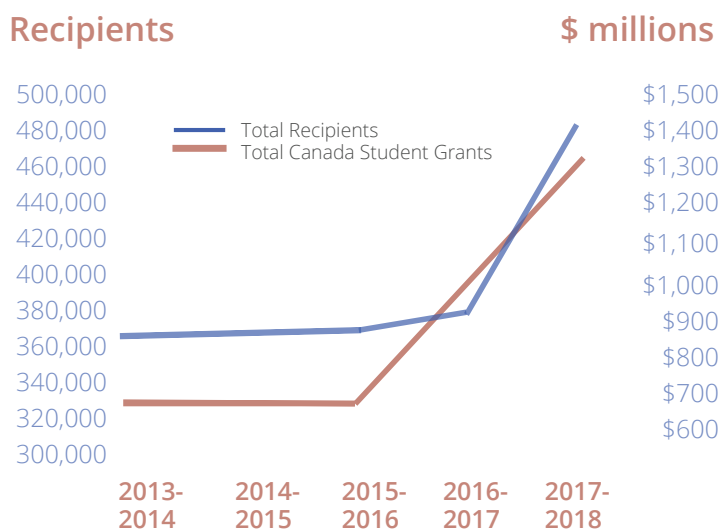
Grants Tied to Inflation

BACKGROUND

Over the past few decades, the cost of post-secondary education has increased at rates much higher than the rate of inflation. Tuition alone has increased by a factor of 2.5 from 1990/91 to 2012/13. Canadian students in 2018 were reported to collectively owe \$19 billion in student loans to the Government of Canada. Living expenses also present a significant cost for students. Expected living costs for SFU undergraduate students living on residence are almost \$7,000 per term, compared to an average tuition cost of \$2,881 per term.

This increasing financial burden has pushed more students to apply for and rely on governmental and private loans and grants. The Canadian and provincial governments have provided educational loans and grants for eligible students since 1994 through the Canada Student Financial Assistance Act. The Canada Student Grants are a collection of different grants that assist low- to middle-income students by providing financial assistance that does not require repayment.

Total Canada Student Grants Disbursed and Recipients Since 2013-14



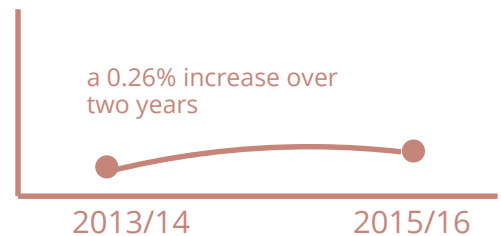
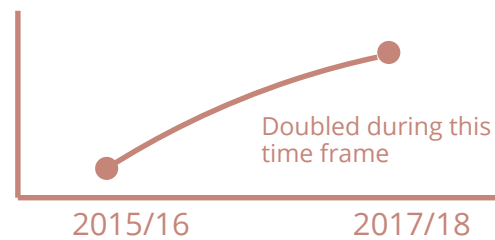
The Pell Grant program, established in 1972, is the largest federal needs-based grant program for undergraduate students in the United States. The grant program provides financial aid to low- and moderate-income students in post-secondary institutions and does not require repayment. However, the Pell Grant program is not tied to the rising cost of tuition, fees, or living expenses that burden students. As a result, the grant has shrunk from covering 79% of the costs for a public four-year college program in 1975, to below 30% of these costs in 2016.

Grants Tied to Inflation

RATIONALE

The annual disbursement of funds from Canada Student Grants has nearly doubled from the 2015/16 fiscal year to 2017/18, but there is still a concern the funds could remain relatively stagnant as they did between 2013/14 to 2015/16 (a 0.26% increase over two years). In years where student grants increased minimally, the low- and middle-income students remain disproportionately impacted by the inflation rates in education as many depend on student loans as their main source of income. A US study found that a stronger federal grant, such as the **Pell Grant Program**, can ensure the success of state grants, particularly those that are 'last-dollar programs' (programs that offset the remainder of students' tuition and fee costs as opposed to providing for tuition, fees and other living expenses). Thus, provinces, institutions or most likely, students themselves will not bear the burden of cost increases that affect not only their ability to pay tuition, but to pay other living expenses as well. This study recommends increasing grants according to the annual consumer price index (CPI) in order for students to keep up with the rising cost of living.

The annual disbursement of funds from Canada Student Grants



RECOMMENDATIONS

- A 2% increase of the Canadian Student Grant disbursement every fiscal year to ensure that educational grants in Canada are increased according to the annual consumer price index (CPI).

Refugee Support at Post-Secondary Institutions

BACKGROUND

In 2018, the UNHCR reported that there are over 25.4 million refugees worldwide. Under the 2019-2021 Immigration Levels Plan, Canada has committed to resettling more refugees than ever before, following a record-setting intake of 46,700 refugees in 2016, which has been surpassed each year since by over 1000 refugees. Approximately 3,500 of Syrian refugees settled in BC in 2015/16, with 50% of this number settling in Surrey Overall, BC accepts roughly 1,600 refugees each year.

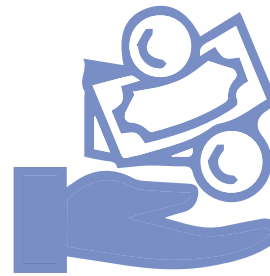
Local immigration partnerships (LIPs) and refugee integration and settlement strategic plans exist in all three cities in which SFU campuses are located: Burnaby, Surrey and Vancouver. However, these strategic plans and reports specifically focus on refugee education from a K-12 and adult education perspective – leaving out post-secondary students.

Government-assisted refugees (GAR) in BC are eligible for BC Student Aid, which is the only specific provision in BC for post-secondary refugee students. SFU offers a number of programs and initiatives that support refugees across the Lower Mainland; and the World University Services of Canada (WUSC), SFU Local Committee is the foremost group on campus which directly supports SFU refugee students. WUSC is a global developmental organization with a chapter at SFU that offers the Student Refugee Program (SRP). In 2016, it was reported that there was 18 new scholarships offered to students through WUSC.

Refugee Support at Post-Secondary Institutions

RATIONALE

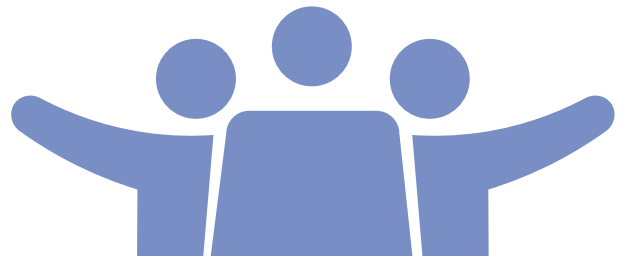
In Canada and BC, there is a gap for over-18 individuals, particularly post-secondary students, with relation to refugee support services. Post-secondary education (PSE) in Canada is critical to refugee economic success across the country. Statistics Canada studies have shown that refugees that receive post-secondary education in Canada within 7 years of landing, particularly those that are female and/or government-assisted refugees (GAR), have significantly better economic outcomes than those that do not. Female refugees experience a substantial rise in average incomes with Canadian PSE within 7 years of landing in Canada. GAR program women who received PSE within first 7 years after arriving in Canada were 75% more likely to be employed in year 8 than those who did not. Additionally, refugees with Canadian PSE earn, on average, \$3,000 to \$8,000 more per year than refugees who did not have PSE after 7 years in Canada. Federal support for GAR-program refugees' access to Canadian PSE promotes the economic success of refugees in Canada, improving both employment and income outcomes, particularly for women.



Refugees with Canadian PSE earn, on average, \$3,000 to \$8,000 more per year than refugees who did not have PSE after 7 years in Canada

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Increasing federal support for GAR program refugees' access to Canadian post-secondary education.
- Providing funding for municipalities participating in local immigration



63.8% of SFU undergraduates think more equity and inclusion support for SFSS members is important or very important