



The Simon Fraser Student Society (SFSS)

**Simon Fraser University
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**Submission to the Select Standing Committee on Finance and
Government Services**

2023 BC Budget Consultation

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Introduction

The Simon Fraser Student Society (SFSS) is a student-led non-profit organization that represents 26,000+ undergraduate students. The SFSS represents membership across the three campuses of Vancouver, Surrey, and Burnaby. The SFSS advocates for students, builds upon student power, and provides services for the membership.

Recommendation 1

Increase financial access to post-secondary education by implementing a tuition freeze by 2023 and providing grants, scholarships, bursaries, and subsidies for BIPOC, migrant/international and low-income students aimed toward affordable post-secondary education and affordable housing.

Background:

In the 2020/2021 year, tuition for domestic students increased by 1.7% and 4.9% for international students¹. Currently, domestic student tuition stands around \$6,580-\$7,304, whereas tuition for international students is up to \$32,019². Additionally, although tuition has increased, B.C Operating Grants have decreased- heavily impacting students who rely on these supports with rising tuition. While there were around 3761 grants in 2009, they have decreased to around 3753 grants³.

Tuition increases replace government funding. Specifically, international students have been relied on to provide operating costs for universities⁴. Moreover, tuition increases are capped at 2% for domestic students⁵ while there is no cap for international students making this reliance even larger and unacceptable.

Rationale:

Tuition increases are more than fees- they affect students' quality of life. Moreover, tuition is not the only fee students pay, there are a multitude of other expenses including rent, food utilities, medical costs and gas. As a result, tuition increases prove to be a barrier to accessing education for marginalized and low-income students, especially those who face obstacles from a young age in facing systemic oppression and inequities within settler colonial Canada.

Universities need greater funding for grants and bursaries. Financial aid provides students with the opportunity to continue their education. Grants and a tuition freeze will work to eliminate student debt which would open the opportunity to bring the economy forward

¹Statistics Canada "Tuition fees for degree programs, 2021/2022
<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/210908/dq210908a-eng.htm>

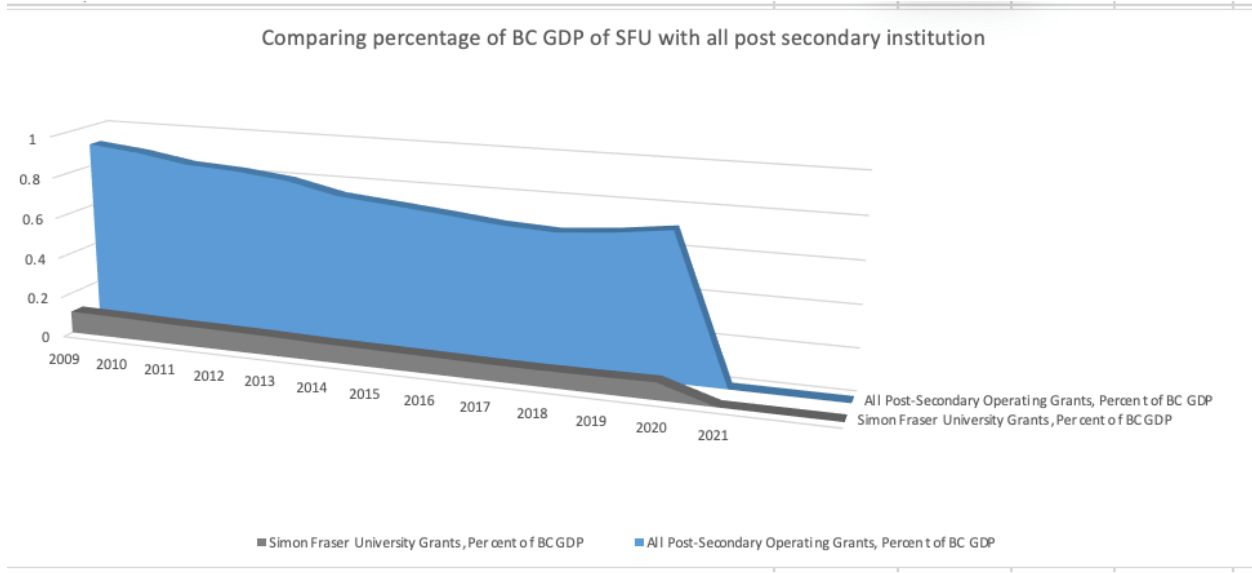
² <https://vivicresearch.ca/PDFS/CFS%20Literature%20Review%20January%2018%20REVISED%20-%20with%20funding%20section.pdf>

³ <https://catalogue.data.gov.bc.ca/dataset/operating-grants-at-b-c-public-post-secondary-institutions>

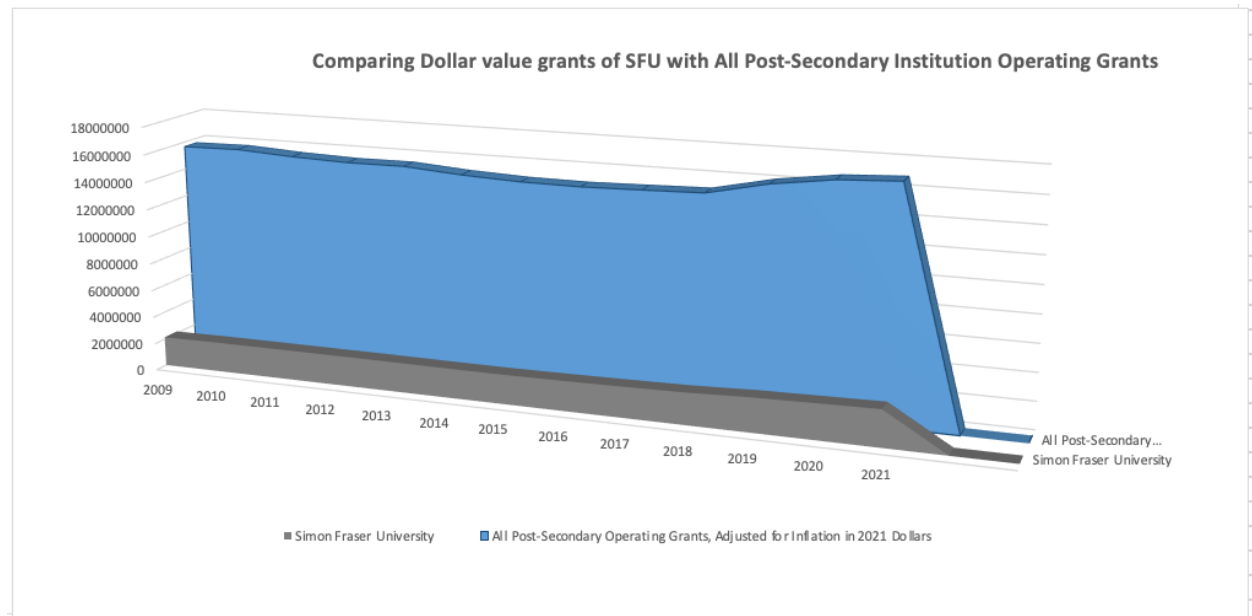
⁴ Statistics Canada "Tuition fees for degree programs", 2021/2022
<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/210908/dq210908a-eng.htm>

⁵ Tuition Limit Policy <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/post-secondary-education/institution-resources-administration/tuition-limit-policy>

and money could be reinvested into societies rather than going towards debt. As a result, the government needs to implement a Tuition Freeze by the year 2023 to provide greater access to advanced education.



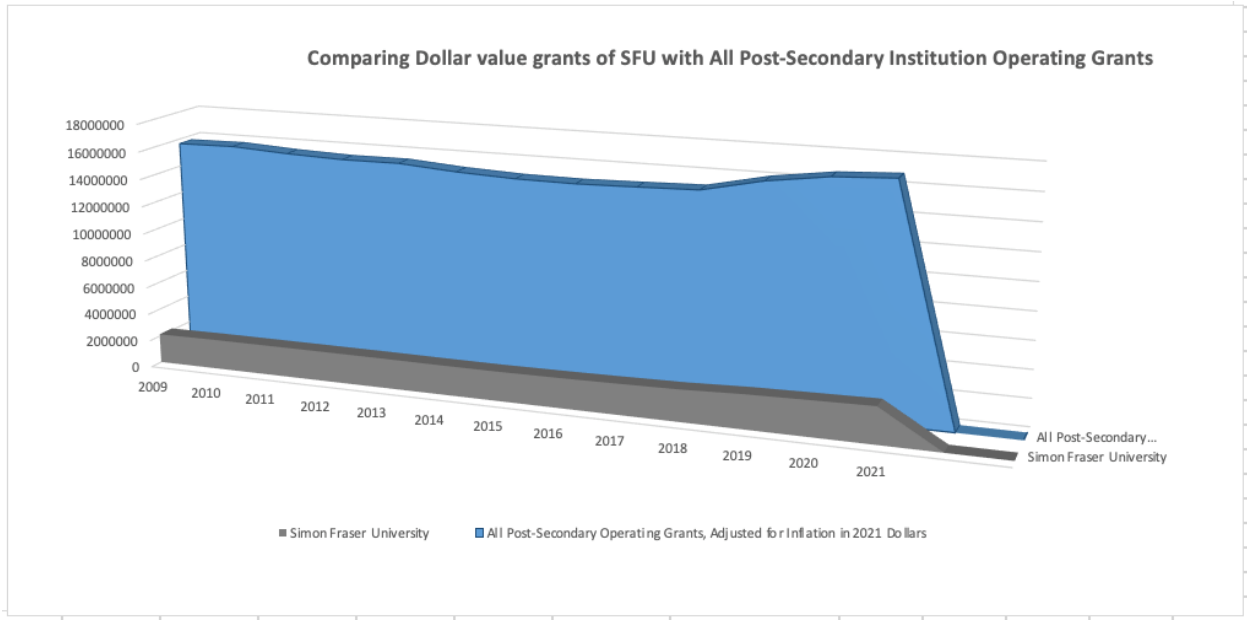
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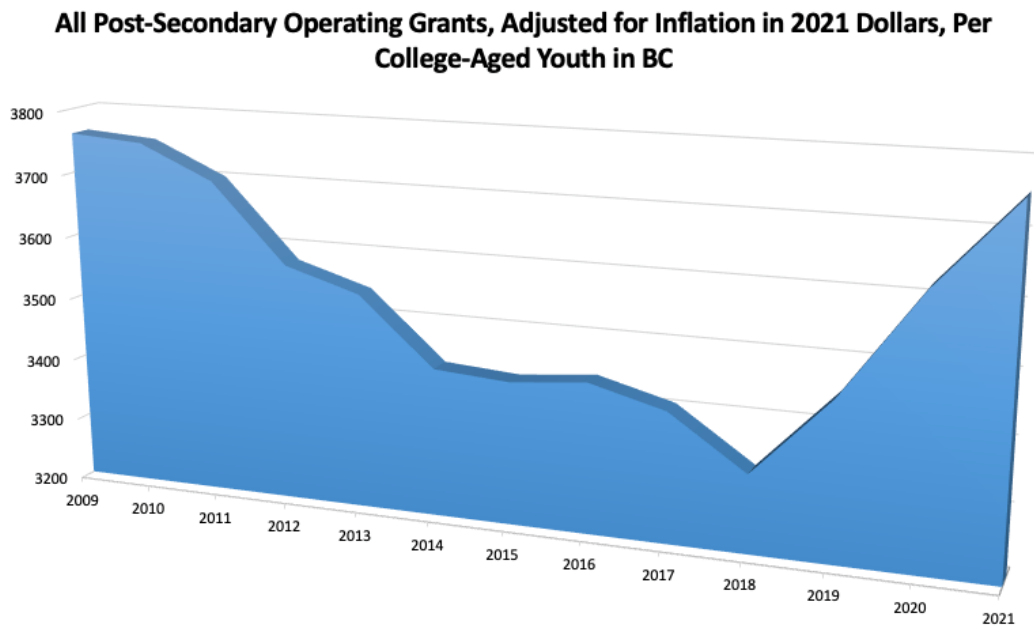
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⁶ <https://catalogue.data.gov.bc.ca/dataset/operating-grants-at-b-c-public-post-secondary-institutions>

⁷ <https://catalogue.data.gov.bc.ca/dataset/operating-grants-at-b-c-public-post-secondary-institutions>



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⁸ <https://catalogue.data.gov.bc.ca/dataset/operating-grants-at-b-c-public-post-secondary-institutions>
⁹ <https://catalogue.data.gov.bc.ca/dataset/operating-grants-at-b-c-public-post-secondary-institutions>

Recommendation 2

Provide expanded accessibility and health services including dedicated funding towards equitable academic accommodations, counselling and other mental health services, and physical and technical infrastructure for universal design in the campus environment and in the online and in-person classroom.

Background:

The SFSS conducted a Covid-19 mental health survey and results displayed that students are not provided adequate mental health services even after facing financial burdens, loss of employment, greater mental health issues involving substance use, and an experiencing a general trend of mental health decline ¹⁰.

Current mental health services provided by the government include a contribution of 2 million dollars for the Campus Peer Support Pilot Project, of which 5 institutions are a part of. However, Simon Fraser University was not included in this project ¹¹. Furthermore, at the provincial level for the 2022 Budget, there is an expected investment of 10 million for 3 years of support.

Rationale:

Although the government allocates money for mental health support initiatives there are no structural or permanent changes made implemented at the advanced education level. Providing mental health support is not only a matter of giving institutions finances but providing long-term and lasting change, especially for students who are marginalized, and making plans to hire those who have the knowledge and lived experiences to support students.

An equitable learning atmosphere and comfortable environment can be implemented with Universal Design. Universal Design would involve institutional change to support students who face barriers at this level as a preventative measure to help students cope with their mental health. For instance, universal design would include a hybrid learning environment and lecture recordings that students can access at any time. Creating these methods is beneficial because many students, including neurodiverse students, require additional time to adequately engage with course material. Implementing universal design will also limit admin work time for professors in terms of emails.

Recommendation 3

¹⁰ The Covid-19 Pandemic and the student experience <https://sfss.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/COVID-19-Survey-Report-4-1.pdf>

¹¹ (H. Canada, 2022b) Campus Peer Support pilot project <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/news/2022/05/health-canada-provides-2m-to-support-mental-health-project-for-post-secondary-students.html>

Provide rent subsidies and affordable, accessible and pet-friendly housing options for post-secondary students with strong student renters protections on and off-campus.

Background:

In the 2010/2011 school year, rent rates per semester were \$4,588-\$5,488, which has risen dramatically to \$6,080-\$10,950 in a decade¹². With rising tuition, cost of living, and minimal wage increases, students cannot keep up with these rising rates.

Research shows that students who live on campus have higher GPAs because transportation to school is not a concern. However, with the current housing rates and increases, living on campus is not feasible- limiting the quality of education students receive. Housing costs also increase debt. While, in 2005, debt was only around \$13,600, in 2016, debt has risen to \$26,000¹³.

Rationale:

Rent subsidies must be prioritized for students. When students live away from their supportive groups, basic needs become prioritized, such as housing and food. This is exemplified for international students who are also navigating a new society and foreign systems. This leads to situations where students take on jobs in unsafe work environments and are taken advantage of by employers. Additionally, international students have are capped to work only 20 hours a week¹⁴ which limits their ability to pay rent and reduces their quality of life.

Moreover, living expenses are 50% higher for those living away from their families¹⁵. Students should be able to prioritize their primary responsibility to be students- not be burdened with stress from housing costs. Through this, students are being limited the university experience of networking, attending university socials, and engaging with diverse perspectives.

¹² Statistics Canada, CONSUMER PRICE INDEXES FOR CANADA, MONTHLY (V41690973 series.)

¹³ Statistics Canada, Graduating in Canada: Labour Market Outcomes and Student Debt of the Class of 2005

¹⁴ Work off campus as an international student <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/study-canada/work/work-off-campus.html>

¹⁵ The Future Cost of A University Degree, TD Bank Financial Group, 15 October 2009

Year	SFU On-Campus Rental Rates (per ¹⁶semester)	North Burnaby Average Rental Rate (4 month total) (\$)
2010-2011	\$4,588-\$5,488	\$3,932.00
2011-2012	\$4,702-\$5,640	\$4,032.00
2012-2013	\$4,876-\$6,136	\$4,100.00
2013-2014	\$5,022-\$6,200	\$4,148.00
2014-2015	\$5,152-\$6,296	\$4,364.00
2015-2016	\$5,320-\$6,368	\$4,448.00
2016-2017	\$5,432-\$9,600	\$4,772.00
2017-2018	\$5,602-\$9,976	\$5,168.00
2018-2019	\$5,858-\$10,232	\$5,568.00
2019-2020	\$6,080-\$10,950	\$5,316.00

¹⁶<https://www.sfu.ca/students/residences/fees/spring.html>