

## RECOMMENDATION

Increase funding for the Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP) and initiate a broad consultation with Indigenous students, communities, and organizations over how Canada can best revitalize the program.

Indigenous students are disproportionately disadvantaged in post-secondary education, with the largest attainment disparity in the university sector.<sup>1</sup> In 2011, only 9.8 percent of the Indigenous population held a university degree,<sup>2</sup> in contrast with 26.5 percent of the non-Indigenous population. Indigenous students routinely cite cost as a major barrier to achieving post-secondary education,<sup>3</sup> largely as a consequence of insufficient funding for thousands of Indigenous students.<sup>4</sup> Canada must do more to eliminate the barriers that impede Indigenous learners from obtaining a post-secondary education, considering their education falls within the purview of the federal government.



PSSSP offers financial assistance to Indigenous students enrolled in post-secondary programs, including undergraduate, advanced, and professional degree programs,<sup>5</sup> as well as diploma and certificate programs. Current funding sits at approximately \$385 million to support 27,600 students annually, for an average grant of approximately \$14,000 per student.<sup>6</sup>

Indigenous people are one of the fastest growing (and youngest) demographic groups in Canada, with a population growth of 20% between 2006 and 2011.<sup>7</sup> The long-term sustainability of PSSSP will be critical for Indigenous youth to access post-secondary education; however, annual growth in funding for the program has been limited to 2% by the Treasury Board since 1997.<sup>8</sup> This means that proportionally fewer Indigenous students will be able to access the program, even though Indigenous people are less likely to obtain a post-secondary education.

The current government promised in their campaign to provide an additional \$200 million to PSSSP over four years, and to lift the 2 percent annual cap on future increases. In the 2017 federal budget, only \$90 million was added to PSSSP along with a commitment to an extensive review of the program with Indigenous partners.

Research by the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) indicates that the deficit in First Nations' educational attainment is 78,000 students, as compared to non-Aboriginal people.<sup>9</sup> To target equal educational achievement among high-school graduates, the AFN calculated that in 2008, \$724 million would be

needed to address the post-secondary gap.<sup>10</sup>

Consistent with the findings of the AFN's report, administration of these funds should be conducted with increased consultation with students and Indigenous communities. Indigenous Services Canada should also conduct a review of eligible expenses and expense caps under the PSSSP to ensure that the program is sufficiently funded to provide for the post-secondary needs of all Indigenous learners

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<sup>1</sup>Statistics Canada, The educational attainment of Aboriginal peoples in Canada (2013), <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-en-m/2011/as-sa/99-012-x/2011003/tbl/tbl1-eng.cfm>.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid

<sup>3</sup>Statistics Canada, Aboriginal Statistics at a Glance: 2nd Edition, (2015), 20, <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-645-x/89-645-x2015001-eng.pdf>

<sup>4</sup>R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. , Factors Affecting the Use of Student Financial Assistance Programs by Aboriginal Youth (2008), 24, [https://library.carleton.ca/sites/default/files/find/data/surveys/pdf\\_files/millennium\\_rs-37\\_lr\\_2008-10\\_en.pdf](https://library.carleton.ca/sites/default/files/find/data/surveys/pdf_files/millennium_rs-37_lr_2008-10_en.pdf)

<sup>5</sup>Post-Secondary Student Support Program, Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (2017), <https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100033682/1100100033683>.

<sup>6</sup>Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, Canada Commits to Increased Post-Secondary Funding For First Nations and Inuit Students (2017), <https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/canada-commits-to-increased-post-secondary-funding-for-first-nations-and-inuit-students-620738543.html>

<sup>7</sup>Statistics Canada, Aboriginal Peoples in Canada: First Nations People, Métis and Inuit, (2013) 6, <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-en-m/2011/as-sa/99-011-x/99-011-x2011001-eng.pdf>

<sup>8</sup>R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. , Factors Affecting the Use of Student Financial Assistance Programs by Aboriginal Youth (2008), [https://library.carleton.ca/sites/default/files/find/data/surveys/pdf\\_files/millennium\\_rs-37\\_lr\\_2008-10\\_en.pdf](https://library.carleton.ca/sites/default/files/find/data/surveys/pdf_files/millennium_rs-37_lr_2008-10_en.pdf)

<sup>9</sup>R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. , Factors Affecting the Use of Student Financial Assistance Programs by Aboriginal Youth (2008), [https://library.carleton.ca/sites/default/files/find/data/surveys/pdf\\_files/millennium\\_rs-37\\_lr\\_2008-10\\_en.pdf](https://library.carleton.ca/sites/default/files/find/data/surveys/pdf_files/millennium_rs-37_lr_2008-10_en.pdf)

<sup>10</sup>Assembly of First Nations, Fact Sheet: First Nations Post-secondary Education (2011), [https://www.afn.ca/uploads/files/education/22.\\_2011\\_afn\\_pse\\_fact\\_sheet.pdf](https://www.afn.ca/uploads/files/education/22._2011_afn_pse_fact_sheet.pdf)