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***Federal Election 2011***

**Where do the  
parties stand on  
post-secondary  
education and  
research?**

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## 1. Federal transfers for post-secondary education

### *At Issue*

Canada's universities and colleges are facing difficult financial times. Skyrocketing tuition fees, not enough full-time faculty, larger class sizes, fewer course offerings, diminished library holdings, and a deteriorating infrastructure are some of the signs of under-funding. Many institutions are imposing hiring freezes, lay-offs, and reductions in services that will have a serious impact on the quality of Canada's post-secondary education system. Meanwhile, provincial governments are warning of limited funding increases in the future.

While the recession is partly to blame, long-term federal under-funding is the primary source of these problems. Current federal cash transfers provided through the Canada Social Transfer (CST) for post-secondary education – approximately \$3.4 billion in 2010-11 – are more than \$410 million short of what would be needed just to restore funding to 1992-93 levels, adjusting for inflation and population growth. Under an agreement with the provinces, the value of the transfer for post-secondary education is set to increase automatically by 3 per cent each year until 2014-15 when the current deal expires. CAUT has argued that this escalator is insufficient to cover inflation and to meet rising enrolment demands.

Meanwhile, the ability of the federal government to address the under-funding of

Canada's universities and colleges is hampered by fundamental flaws in the CST. The CST is an unconditional block fund. Where, how or even if the money is spent, let alone spent on post-secondary education, is left entirely to the provinces. This contrasts with the funding of health care, provided through a separate funding envelope – the Canada Health Transfer – and governed by national standards as provided in the *Canada Health Act*.

CAUT has long advocated that the CST be replaced by separate stand-alone funds for social services and post-secondary education, with the latter governed by new legislation. Modelled on the *Canada Health Act*, a *Post-Secondary Education Act* would outline clear responsibilities and expectations for the federal and provincial/territorial governments, establish pan-Canadian guidelines and principles, and determine long-term and stable funding.

### *Where they Stand*

#### *Bloc Québécois*

The Bloc Québécois is demanding the federal government restore the full value of cash transfers for post-secondary education provided through the CST, roughly \$800 million per year. In addition, the Bloc is calling on Ottawa to transfer to Quebec the tax room equivalent to what the federal government spends on programs in Quebec that fall under provincial jurisdiction, including education.

The Bloc is opposed to any conditions being attached to federal cash transfers as this in

their view would encroach on provincial rights.

#### *Conservative Party*

The Conservatives promise not to reduce transfers to the provinces for health care or education. Their platform does not state whether they would modify the 3 per cent annual escalator or if they would ear-mark future transfers for post-secondary education.

#### *Green Party*

The Green Party promises to increase federal transfers to provincial governments that are ear-marked for post-secondary education, but the amount is not specified. The Party is also pledging to ensure that an unspecified portion of the funding is long-term and predictable, provided that the provinces meet certain national “quality metric” indicators including increasing the number of tenure-track professors and a higher ratio of professors to students.

The Greens also pledge to work with the provinces to support lifelong learning programs.

#### *Liberal Party*

The Liberal Party platform provides no specific promise with respect to CST transfers for post-secondary education. Instead, the Liberals promise to pursue what they call a “modern federalism” in which Ottawa will work with the provinces to address the, “21st century challenges that do not confine themselves neatly to jurisdictional divisions.”

#### *New Democratic Party*

The NDP promises to increase federal cash transfers to the provinces by \$800 million per year. The new money will be directly designated toward reducing tuition fees. To ensure this, the party plans to enact a *Post-Secondary Education Act* that was introduced as a NDP private members’ bill in the last Parliament (Bill C-635).

The proposed legislation mirrors CAUT’s draft *Act*. It would create a separate fund for post-secondary education and require the provinces, with the special exception of Quebec, to make certain federal cash transfers are provided to public institutions to lower tuition costs. The legislation would also require that in order to receive funding provinces would have to ensure that universities and colleges are universally accessible to all qualified students, are publicly-administered and accountable, and respect academic freedom and collegial governance.

## **2. Research funding and policy**

#### *At Issue*

Successive federal governments have increasingly targeted scientific research funding while allocations for independent, peer-reviewed projects through the three granting councils have fallen in real terms. This has meant that research priorities are increasingly set by politicians, not the scientific community.

Governments have also attached more strings to funding, often requiring academic researchers to seek out “co-funders” and to commercialize their research. In recent budgets, the government has actively targeted new research funding to specific priorities that exclude the majority of academic researchers in most disciplines.

Basic research undertaken by government agencies and on which many academic researchers rely has also been neglected. The National Research Council has had its budget reduced and been directed to focus more on applied research that has commercial value. The Conservative government cancelled the mandatory long-form Census, a decision that will affect the ability of researchers from across a wide range of disciplines to conduct their work.

The next government must increase funding for independent, peer-reviewed, basic research in universities and colleges, and invest in government science to better ensure the scientific community meets the needs of Canadians.

### ***Where they Stand***

#### *Bloc Québécois*

The Bloc is calling for increased tax credits for research and development, and for more direct federal support for scientific research in the pharmaceutical and aerospace industries in Quebec. The platform calls for federal research funding to better meet Quebec’s needs.

#### *Conservative Party*

The Conservative platform promises to enact many of the measures announced in the 2011 Budget before the dissolution of Parliament. These include the creation of 10 additional Canada Excellence Research Chairs, and funding targeted to the National Optics Institute, the Perimeter Institute, and Brain Canada. Notably, the platform does not say whether the Conservative Party is committed to increasing funding for the three granting councils, even at the very modest levels announced in Budget 2011.

The Conservatives also support the greater commercialization of university and college research. They will, as outlined in Budget 2011, establish 30 Industrial Research Chairs at colleges and polytechnics, and support research partnerships between college and university researchers through the granting councils. They also promise to act on the recommendations of a forthcoming report on all federally-funded research to “ensure our investments deliver results.”

#### *Green Party*

The Greens will increase funding to the three granting councils by 15 per cent annually in each of the next four years. They intend to focus this funding on research related to environmental needs, including renewable energy, smart growth, environmental restoration and climate change response strategies. In addition, they advocate the establishment of a federal research program to investigate the barriers to post-secondary education.

The Greens propose to cut all research funding into genetically-modified organisms, institute a ban on any further research related to genetic engineering, increase funding for organic food production, and limit the use of animals in research experiments. The party would also eliminate all funding for research at Atomic Energy Canada Limited (AECL).

With regard to government science, the Green Party would provide \$15 million annually to add scientific staff to Environment Canada, Health Canada and Fisheries and Oceans.

#### *Liberal Party*

The Liberal Party's platform emphasizes the importance of basic research, but makes no specific funding commitment. The document notes that basic research produces long-term benefits: "The CANADARM, the Blackberry, IMAX and canola are among the many examples of innovative breakthroughs that would not have occurred without public investment in basic science, research and development." The party says it will increase investments in basic research, but only as the country's fiscal situation improves.

Until then, the Liberals plan to provide new research funding targeted at brain research, oil sands environmental impacts, and efforts to protect freshwater ecosystems. The party has also identified three "champion sectors" that will be the focus of their innovation strategy: clean energy, health and biosciences, and digital technologies.

The Liberals would restore the mandatory long-form Census.

#### *New Democratic Party*

The NDP campaign platform does not mention any funding plans with respect to the granting councils. It does propose to establish a *Green Bond Fund* to encourage investments in green energy research and development and its commercialization.

The NDP would also restore the mandatory long-form Census.

### **3. Support for students**

#### *At Issue*

Since 1990, average undergraduate arts tuition has tripled, and fees in professional programs have risen even higher. Financial assistance for students in need remains inadequate. The maximum level of assistance provided through the Canada Student Grant Program for low-income students is just \$2,000 per year, which is not even enough to cover half the cost of tuition in most provinces.

Meanwhile, a host of tax credits and other programs, such as the Canada Learning Bond (CLB) and the Registered Education Savings Plan (RESP) have proved inadequate. Tax credits disproportionately benefit higher income earners and provide no up-front funding when students and their families need it the most. Fewer than one in six eligible children receive the CLB, and according to Statistics Canada fewer than 19% of eligible families earning less than \$30,000 a year have been able to make a RESP contribution.

The inadequacy of student financial assistance is placing an increased financial burden on students and their families, leading to rising student debt and concerns that the promise of a university and college education is moving beyond the reach of more and more Canadians.

The next federal government must work with the provinces to develop a pan-Canadian strategy to lower and to ensure students in need have access to better grants and debt relief when they need it.

### ***Where They Stand***

#### *Bloc Québécois*

The Bloc is calling on the federal government to exempt from federal income tax all student scholarships and bursaries, including post-doctoral fellowships. The latter would mean post-doctoral fellowships would be treated as students, rather than as academic staff.

The platform also demands that Ottawa transfer to the province any savings in student financial assistance programs it has acquired as a result of Quebec's decision to keep tuition fees lower than the national average.

#### *Conservative Party*

The Conservatives are promising a number of modest measures to assist students. They plan to enhance the Canada Student Loans Program (CSLP) for part-time students.

The Conservatives are also proposing to double the work exemption period under the CSLP to allow students to earn more through

part-time employment without a reduction in their loan limit.

#### *Green Party*

In its platform, the Green Party promises to provide \$400 million annually in funding for a needs-based Canadian National Student Loan and Bursary. The party would establish a Student Education Funding Committee with the task of creating this new national student financial assistance system. The goal would be to eliminate all student debt.

The Greens also plan to shift student assistance away from tax-based credits and RESPs to upfront grants. They propose to allow all students to be eligible for student loans to cover the cost of tuition regardless of parental income. The party would decrease interest charged on student loans to the prime rate, and extend the period over which loans must be repaid. As well, the student loan payment grace period would be extended to two years after graduation and would be interest-free during this time.

An Opportunity Grant would be created for graduate students with high financial need, and undergraduate research fellowships, funding through the granting councils, would be established.

#### *Liberal Party*

The Liberal Party is promising to establish a new "Canadian Learning Passport" program at a cost of \$1 billion annually. The program will provide up to \$1,000 a year over four years for every high school student in Canada to use for college, university or CÉGEP. For

students in low income families, the amount will be \$1,500 a year, or \$6,000 in total. The money will be deposited into a Registered Education Savings Plan (RESP), with parents not required to make a contribution.

The Learning Passport will be available in annual instalments of \$1000 or \$1500 at the start of the academic year, with reduced amounts for part-time study. If a student completes his or her studies before the Passport benefits are fully paid out, what is left will remain in the RESP, available to support further post-secondary learning in later years. If an individual does not attend college or university, the money does not get paid out and is recouped by the government.

According to the Liberal platform document, the Learning Passport will be partly paid for by ending and rolling in the Textbook and Education tax credits (except for graduate students). The Tuition Tax Credit will remain in place. There would be no changes to the Canada Student Loans Program and the associated Canada Student Grant Program.

Also if elected, a Liberal government would implement a new Veterans' Learning Benefit to provide full support for the costs of up to four years of college, university or technical education for Canadian Forces veterans after completion of service.

#### *New Democratic Party*

The New Democratic Party will increase transfers to the provinces by \$800 million per year to reduce tuition fees. The party will increase funding for the Canada Student Grants Program by \$200 million a year.

The party also plans to raise the education tax credit limit from \$4,800 per year to \$5,760 per year.

## **4. Copyright Reform**

### ***At Issue***

Changes to Canadian copyright law could have profound implications for the creators, owners and users of copyright works. Bill C-32, the *Copyright Modernization Act*, introduced in the last Parliament would have allowed the publishing and entertainment industries to completely lock down digital material – denying teachers, librarians, researchers and students important rights to access and use content. At the same time, the bill also contained important new rights and protections for the education sector, including the expansion of fair dealing – the right to copy material without permission or payment in certain circumstances.

Canadians need a balanced approach to copyright legislation. Copyright reforms need to deter commercial piracy, but not through digital locks that would inhibit access to digital material for lawful purposes. A balanced approach will ensure that creators are justly compensated for their work, and that the right of students, academic staff and the public to reasonable and fair access is protected, including expansion of fair dealing.

### ***Where they Stand***

#### *Bloc Québécois*

The Bloc opposes the inclusion of education in the list of fair dealing uses in Bill C-32. The

Bloc also supports a levy on the sale of all digital music players and on a fee on Internet Service Providers. Revenues from these levies would be used to compensate artists.

*Conservative Party*

A Conservative government would reintroduce the *Copyright Modernization Act*. Despite concerns raised about the digital lock provisions, the Conservative Party platform claims the legislation is balanced and recognizes the practical priorities of teachers, students, artists, families, and technology companies.

*Green Party*

The Greens say they will support copyright legislation that is based on fair dealing principles, but provide no further details in their platform.

*Liberal Party*

The Liberals are promising to develop a fair balance in copyright between the rights of creators and consumers, but provide few specifics. Their platform document states that creators have a right to be compensated for works they produce in digital format, but that consumers also have a right to use and access digital content they own. The document also notes that Liberals have promoted the inclusion of a private copying compensation fund in legislation instead of a tax on consumers.

*New Democratic Party*

The NDP campaign platform contains a general promise to introduce copyright

legislation that adheres to Canada's international obligations while balancing the rights of creators and consumers.

## 5. Aboriginal post-secondary education

### *At Issue*

Rising education fees have had a particularly negative impact on Canada's Aboriginal students. Funding provided to band councils through the Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP) to support students has remained capped at 2 per cent per year since 1996. Since then tuition fees have skyrocketed, while demand has risen sharply. Between 1996 and 2006, the Aboriginal population in Canada grew by 45 per cent.

When the PSSSP funding cap was introduced in 1996, the program provided financial assistance for about 27,000 students. By 2009, however, just 23,000 Aboriginal students received assistance.

Additionally, the federal government currently funds Status Indian and Inuit peoples only, leaving non-Status and Métis peoples without dedicated support. As a result, thousands of qualified Aboriginal and Métis students are unable to get the funding they need to pursue a post-secondary education.

The next government must honour its historical commitments to Canada's First Nations by recognizing that education is a treaty right. All qualified Aboriginal students should have the funding they need to attend a university or college.

### ***Where they Stand***

#### *Bloc Québécois*

In its platform, the Bloc pledges to work to improve educational funding for Aboriginals in Quebec and to ensure that increases are, at a minimum, equal to population growth.

#### *Conservative Party*

The Conservative Party platform promises to expand adult basic education programming in the territories with the aim of increasing the education and employment opportunities among Aboriginal Canadians in the North. The platform does not provide for an increase in the PSSSP.

#### *Green Party*

The Greens plan to invest in early intervention programs, including grants, mentorship and campus exposure programs that focus on encouraging low-income and Aboriginal students to pursue post-secondary education. The party would also support the development of Aboriginal education and assist in the delivery of health care, education and other services in a way that respects traditional practices.

The platform does not specifically mention any plans with respect to the PSSSP.

#### *Liberal Party*

The Liberals have announced plans to invest an additional \$200 million over two years to end the 2 per cent cap on post-secondary education funding for Aboriginal students.

The party also pledges to maintain the current funding mechanism, but to consult with Aboriginal leaders on ways to “deliver resources more directly to students and their families.”

The Liberals also promise to “re-finance” First Nations University in Saskatchewan and to create a Canada Métis Scholarship program worth \$5 million annually.

#### *New Democratic Party*

New Democrats promise to invest \$1 billion per year over the next four years in a new Aboriginal Education Fund. It is not specified in the party's platform what share of that will be allocated to post-secondary education.