

Colleges and Institutes Canada (CICan) Federal Election 2019 – Policy Backgrounder

Why Federal Elections matter to Colleges, Institutes, Cegeps and Polytechnics

Though education is undeniably a provincial/territorial jurisdiction, colleges and institutes are also affected by many federal policies and programs. Engaging with federal politicians, especially in the context of a general election, is therefore critical to make sure that our priorities and issues are well understood.

1. Areas of Federal Intervention aligned with CICan Budget 2020 Priorities

This section identifies areas of federal intervention as they align with CICan's priorities for Budget 2020. The main federal funding programs are identified, along with the issues, Budget 2020 recommendations and key facts.

1.1 Support Innovation through Applied Research

Colleges and institutes received approximately \$99 million in research funding in 2017-18 from the three federal funding agencies (NSERC, SSHRC and CIHR), the Canada Foundation for Innovation, the National Research Council – Industrial Research Assistance Program and the regional development agencies. The main source of federal funding that has built up college applied research capacity is the Tri-Agency College and Community Innovation Program administered by NSERC.

Issue: This is still just a small fraction of the overall funding available for post-secondary research.

Investing in business innovation engagement services, independent of project-based research grants, would provide stable and predictable funding for college and institute applied research offices and centres to serve the R&D needs of companies and community partners.

CICan's Budget 2020 recommendations:

- Expand SME participation in the R&D ecosystem with an investment of \$40 million per year in business innovation engagement services based in colleges, institutes and polytechnics.
- Make an ongoing investment of \$15 million per year in social innovation research at colleges, institutes and polytechnics, with a specific stream for Indigenous community-led research.

Key Facts:

In 2017-2018 colleges and institutes worked with over 7300 partners, resulting in over 4400 concrete innovations, including new products, services, prototypes or processes, over 90% of which were completed within one year.



1.2 Invest in Skills Development to support Canadians in a Changing Economy

The federal government supports employability by providing access to postsecondary education (PSE) and skills training. Recent investments in the Canada Training Benefit and Future Skills Centre complement the ongoing programs such as the Canada Student Loans Program; Employment Insurance training programs; Labour Market Development Agreements; essential skills programs; and apprenticeship incentive and completion grants, including targeted grants for women in non-traditional trades.

Issue: With over 50% of jobs expected to be affected by automation in the next 10 years, it is crucial we develop a culture of lifelong learning that allows Canadians to update their skills and knowledge.

To strengthen Canada's training infrastructure, CICan recommends the federal government streamline training programs and supports, and strengthen, coordination between the needs of individuals, employers and training providers. To help streamline access and completion of skills training, Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) services can be added as an eligible training expense through federal skills and employment programs.

CICan's Budget 2020 recommendations:

Increase investments in retraining and support mechanisms that meet the needs of individuals, employers and training providers, including the use of PLAR services. Support the development of a national framework to promote the integration of climate change adaptation and mitigation into postsecondary education and reskilling/upskilling programs to align with employers' emerging needs.

Key Facts:

- **95% of Canadians live within 50km of a college campus or learning centre. This proximity is unmatched in the post-secondary education sector. It makes learning opportunities accessible to all and allows for deep ties with local employers and communities.**
- **Colleges and institutes offer over 10,000 different programs across the country.**

1.3 Increase Indigenous Peoples' Access to PSE and Skills Training to Support Reconciliation

Through Indigenous Services Canada, several federal programs such as the Post-Secondary Student Support Program and the Post-Secondary Partnerships Program support the participation of Indigenous people in post-secondary education and make campuses more welcoming environments for Indigenous students. Budget 2019 committed specific funding for First Nations, Inuit and Métis students based on agreements signed with national Indigenous organizations. It also committed funding for the revitalization of Indigenous languages and reconciliation through the creation of the National Council for Reconciliation.

Issue: As noted by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in its final report, education is a key component of reconciliation. As the main providers of post-secondary education amongst Indigenous communities, colleges and institutes have an essential role to play.

Access to financial assistance continues to be a key barrier to Indigenous peoples' participation in PSE and further increases are needed to federal funding programs for First Nations, Métis and Inuit students. There is also a need to strengthen pathways into PSE for Indigenous people, by ramping up support for skills upgrading, in particular for the high proportion who have not completed high school and need upgrading to gain equivalencies before starting PSE.

CICan's Budget 2020 recommendation:

Increase funding for Indigenous peoples to access skills upgrading and post-secondary education and provide wraparound supports for Indigenous learner success.

Key Facts:

- **86% of Indigenous people live within 50 km of a college campus or learning centre**
- **Colleges and institutes offer over 300 credential programs (certificates, diplomas, bachelor's degrees and postgraduate certificates) tailored to the needs of Indigenous learners and communities.**
- **The percentage of Indigenous people with a college diploma is nearly on par with non-Indigenous people at 23%.**

1.4 Invest in Post-secondary Education Infrastructure

The federal government is a major contributor to most public infrastructure, including on college and institute campuses. The 2016 Post-secondary Institutions Strategic Innovation Fund invested \$2.5 billion in post-secondary education, \$650 million of which went to colleges and institutes. Budget 2018 also committed \$572 million for digital infrastructure, which is an important issue for rural colleges and institutes.

Issue: There is still a pressing need for further infrastructure funding at colleges and institutes across Canada, both for new facilities and the renewal and maintenance of current infrastructure. A new investment in PSE infrastructure would enable colleges to make necessary upgrades to provide more energy efficient facilities that support learning and innovation, including Indigenous learning and gathering spaces.

CICan's Budget 2020 recommendation:

Invest in postsecondary education infrastructure to make campuses greener, more energy efficient and better equipped to meet future skills development needs and advance on Indigenous education, entrepreneurship development and innovation.

Key Facts:

- **Over 60% of existing college and institute infrastructure currently exceeds its 40-year life cycle and requires replacement or significant maintenance.**
- **A survey of colleges and institutes identified ready-to-go maintenance and construction projects valued at over \$7.6 billion.**

1.5 Leverage Canadian College and Institute Expertise to support International Development

Global Affairs Canada sets national objectives and is the main funder of international development initiatives, including in post-secondary education. Many Canadian colleges and institutes participate in international projects and CICan leads several Education for Employment programs in Africa, the Caribbean and Latin America that leverage their expertise to support the development of responsive, demand-driven programs.

Issue: Technical vocation education and training (TVET) has a critical role in supporting social and economic development in developing countries and in emerging economies, including to address pressing challenges such as high youth unemployment, increasing opportunities for women and girls and climate change adaptation and mitigation. With Canada's strong performance recognized by the OECD in these areas, opportunities exist to further share and leverage the expertise of the Canadian college and institute system internationally.

CICan's Budget 2020 recommendation:

Increase support for skills development and applied research to support climate change adaptation in developing countries.

2. Other Important Areas of Federal Investment and CICan Advocacy Priorities

The following are other important areas of federal investment that benefit colleges and institutes and their students.

2.1 Work-integrated Learning

The federal government funds and supports several internship and work-integrated learning (WIL) programs that are important for students and recent graduates. This includes a significant increase and expansion of WIL funding programs in Budget 2019 and the \$600 million Youth Employment and Skills Strategy under which CICan's Career Launcher Internships are funded. They also support Mitacs,

which received \$221 million in 2017 to create more work-integrated placement opportunities, including a pilot program for applied research internships for college and institute students. To achieve its goals, the federal government's support for WIL must consider the central role of colleges and institutes in providing opportunities and working in partnership with employers.

2.2 International Student Mobility

According to Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE), Canada lags far behind other nations, with less than 3% of Canadian post-secondary students have the opportunity to study abroad for one or more semesters. To address this, Budget 2019 committed \$147.9 million for a new International

Education Strategy, which aims to support outbound mobility and help Canadian post-secondary students gain the skills needed to succeed in a global economy. Emphasis will be placed on flexible and cohort mobility experiences and increasing opportunities for vulnerable groups.

2.3 International Student Recruitment

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) is responsible for granting study permits and work permits to the more than 170 000 international students attending Canadian colleges and institutes. IRCC is also responsible for establishing pathways to citizenship for graduates who wish to remain in

Canada. As most colleges and institutes increase their international recruitment efforts, we must ensure that demands for study permits are handled quickly and efficiently. Pathways to citizenship must also remain accessible to new graduates who are ideally placed to integrate and contribute to the Canadian economy.

2.4. Supporting Sustainable Development

The federal government, through Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Funding Program, supports and leverages the work of various stakeholders to deliver improved outcomes for Canadians, with the aim of leaving no one behind.

The United Nations' 17 SDGs align seamlessly with the goals and objectives of colleges and institutes. CICan members seek to create and strengthen partnerships, advance applied research and foster innovation to meet the SDGs. The federal funding program will offer valuable support to meet these global goals.

2.5 Official Languages

In March 2019, the Federal government launched a process to modernize Canada's Official Languages Act, which was first adopted 50 years ago. Serving communities across Canada, colleges and institutes have a critical role to play in the advancement of our two official languages. They help students pursue postsecondary studies in the official language of their choice, and encourage second language learning,

including for new immigrants. They also contribute to the vitality of official language minority communities and engage in activities that go well beyond education, playing the role of community hubs where official minority languages are not only taught, but where their cultures can also grow.