



Public Interest Alberta

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Invest In Albertans to

Build a top quality, more affordable and accessible public post - secondary education system

Why it matters

Public commitment to post secondary education is a necessary part of any response to the global economic downturn. Investing in Alberta's public universities, colleges and technical institutes is the key to creating a knowledge-based economy of the future and to building productive, healthy and diverse communities. Post-secondary graduates will be crucial to our future, but without taking steps today Alberta cannot guarantee that future. By increasing the support for our public post-secondary institutions, our students, and our academic and non-academic staff, we will not only help stimulate Alberta's short-term economic recovery, we will be laying the foundation for Alberta's long-term future as a leader in the global knowledge economy.

The current situation

- Alberta has the lowest high school to post-secondary transition rate of all provinces, with only 48% of high school students going to post-secondary education within four years of leaving high school – the national average is 62%.
- The post-secondary system is operating beyond capacity and is only planning on expanding by 22,890 by 2017, well short of the promised 30,000 new spaces by 2011 and 60,000 by 2020.
- The average tuition in Alberta is at \$5,361 a year, \$600 more than the national average and more than three times the cost in 1990 in constant dollars. In 2007, only 51% agreed the post-secondary system was within the means of most Albertans, which is down from 75% in 2001.
- The Government of Alberta's own "Access Plan" believes that "despite projected enrollment increases, the number of graduates from Alberta's post-secondary system will be insufficient to meet demand. The current plan says we will be short 20,000 graduates by 2017.
- Given the expansion of post-secondary education in Canada, there is strong competition across the country for the services of top quality academic and non-academic staff, and Alberta needs to keep up investment in our public post-secondary institutions to ensure that they can attract and retain appropriate numbers of highly qualified personnel.
- Financial issues continue to be the top reason that young people do not pursue post-secondary education after high school. This was cited by 33% of those surveyed, compared to those who were undecided (31%), currently employed (20%), or cited entrance requirements (8%).

- Canada spends far below the OECD average in public funding for post-secondary education – only 55% of expenditures come from the federal and provincial governments compared to the OECD average of 73%.
- Alberta needs to invest in more places for graduate students. This will require more research opportunities, facilities, scholarships, financial assistance, and support for senior academic staff to supervise increasing numbers of grad students. By way of comparison, Ontario announced last year that it will spend \$51.6 million to add some 3,300 new graduate spaces at its universities over the next few years.
- Even with the province's targeted investments in recent years, the backlog of deferred maintenance at Alberta's public post-secondary institutions continues to be a major concern for many institutions.

Cuts will hurt families, the community and the economy

With over 70% of new jobs requiring some level of post-secondary education, cutting funding to our universities, colleges and technical institutes is certain to delay Alberta's economic recovery and will limit our ability to move away from a non-renewable resource economy. Post-secondary graduates will drive tomorrow's economy, with the education and flexible skills which will be required to compete in the knowledge economy. Alberta needs more post-secondary spaces with fewer financial barriers for students, together with better support for our faculty and staff.

Investing in a more accessible and affordable quality post-secondary system will:

1. Create more quality spaces at Alberta's public universities, colleges and technical institutes.
2. Expand the number of faculty and staff in order to improve the quality of our public post-secondary education system.
3. Reduce tuition and other financial barriers for students and their families.
4. Increase funding for graduate students at Alberta's universities.
5. Support deferred maintenance and other infrastructure projects needed for the expansion of the system.

Take Action Now

Tell the provincial government you want them to commit to investing in Albertans. You believe in strong public services and programs for healthy communities and a strong economy! Go to www.investinalbertans.org to send a message to the government and learn more about the campaign.