

## **CAFCE – 2018 Federal Budget Submission**

The Canadian Association for Co-operative Education (CAFCE) is a professional association representing 85 post-secondary institutions across Canada. CAFCE has over 40 years of experience in providing leadership in co-operative education and work-integrated learning programming. CAFCE's 500 members include many of Canada's leading experts on the research, pedagogy, and operationalization of work-integrated learning programs.

### **Executive Summary**

CAFCE fully endorses the Student Work Integrated Learning Program introduced in Budget 2016 and sees it as an important step towards increasing WIL participation across STEM and Business industries. CAFCE recommends that the government expand SWILP in four areas in order to increase the long term impact of the program and to extend access to more Canadian students:

- 1) Expand the program to students in all disciplines including those in the humanities and social students
- 2) Expand the program to public sector industries, particularly health care where work-integrated learning opportunities for students are often unpaid
- 3) Extend SWILP to international students
- 4) Provide grants for student startups created as part of a work-integrated learning program

CAFCE also recommends some activities for the SWILP partnership funds in order to increase access for under-represented populations and to better understand the impact of work-integrated learning programs at a national level. Specifically, CAFCE recommends that the government:

- 1) Fund the creation of a national database to collect statistical data on WIL opportunities
- 2) Develop a research grant program to advance our understanding of the impact of work-integrated learning on Canada's productivity and competitiveness
- 3) Dedicate SWILP partnership funds for the development of resources and scaffolded WIL programming to help prepare under-represented students for full-time, 16 week work-integrated learning opportunities

### **Expansion of the Student Work-Integrated Learning Program**

CAFCE is delighted that the Canadian Federal Government has acknowledged the importance of work-integrated learning through dedicated funding initiatives in Budget 2016 and Budget 2017. In particular, the Student Work-Integrated Learning Program (SWILP) administered through Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) has the potential to have significant impact on the Canadian labour market and employment outcomes for Canada's new graduates. By allocating funds for the promotion of student-work integrated learning programs and providing wage subsidies for net new WIL positions, more Canadian employers will learn of the benefits of engaging student talent and will benefit from the skills, ideas, and fresh perspectives of Canada's youth. More post-secondary students will benefit from practical work experience, earning funds to support their education and developing key transferrable and employer-demanded skills to help them integrate more effectively into the workplace upon graduation. In a 2012 study completed by the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, employers indicated that financial incentives were the single most important support to initiate or increase their hiring of work-integrated learning students. Information about WIL was seen as the second most

important support (Sattler & Peters, 2012). SWILP's current structure with its blend of wage subsidies and partnership funds addresses both of these employer needs and provides valuable funds to kickstart significant additional student hiring across STEM and business industries. The partnership funds help to build important alliances between post-secondary and industry and can help in the creation of a student hiring ecosystem that will have lasting impact on the Canadian labour force.

### **Expand SWILP to students and industries beyond STEM and business**

CAFCE recommends that the government expand the SWILP program beyond its current constraints to post-secondary students across all disciplines. Opportunities to participate in work-integrated learning programs are particularly important for students in the humanities and social sciences where there are fewer direct paths to employment. Many CAFCE member schools operate successful co-op programs for students in the humanities and social sciences and see strong outcomes for their participants. Students in the arts and humanities excel in a variety of work-integrated learning positions and bring a breadth of transferrable skills to the workplace. Increasing employer supports for work-integrated learning programs in these fields allows employers to benefit from this breadth of skills and provides important employment related outcomes for these students. A 2014 study completed by CAFCE Atlantic Research Committee found that graduates in the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences who participated in co-op programs were more likely than their peers to believe that their post-secondary education helped them to acquire the skills needed for particular job (94% vs. 75% of all graduates). Further, graduates in the Humanities, Arts & Social Sciences with co-op experience were more likely than all other graduates in the discipline to feel their post-secondary program helped them to "a great or some extent" in helping them find the path for what they want to do in life (94% vs. 74%) (CAFCE Atlantic Research Report, 2014).

CAFCE also recommends that the government consider extending wage subsidies to public and not-for-profit sector employers including the health sector where work-integrated learning opportunities are prevalent but often unpaid. Not only do paid internships help increase access to post-secondary education by providing a means for students to earn money while completing their education, studies also show that there are better outcomes for both employers and students when work-integrated learning experiences are paid. Paid student employees are more likely to have engaged in meaningful work (Chatzsky and McGrath, 2011) and paid student workers are more likely to be hired post-graduation (Bailey, Hughes, and Barr, 2000). By extending SWILP wage subsidies for public and not-for-profit sector work-integrated learning opportunities, the federal government has the opportunity to introduce systemic change within these industries, encouraging and fostering a culture of paid employment for student workers.

### **Extending SWILP eligibility to international students**

The current SWILP guidelines provide for an enhanced wage subsidy for recent immigrants. While this is an important step, CAFCE encourages the government to extend eligibility for SWILP to international students enrolled in post-secondary educational programs. As noted by the Advisory Council on Economic Growth in 2016, "international students meet the general preconditions for proven successful economic integration – youth, language proficiency, and education...After years of studying in Canada, they tend to have strong language skills and be acclimatized to Canadian society" (Advisory Council on Economic Growth, 2016, p.8). According to the Canadian Bureau of International Education, 51% of international students plan on applying for permanent residence in Canada (Canadian Bureau of

Education, 2016). Extending SWILP wage subsidy eligibility to this group would increase their chances of gaining valuable Canadian work experience which could have a positive impact on their interest in pursuing permanent residence and their ability to successfully transition into the Canadian workforce.

### **Extending SWILP to provide support for student startups**

Finally, CAFCE would like to encourage the expansion of SWILP for student entrepreneurial ventures, an initiative directly related to improving Canada's competitiveness. For many years, some Canadian co-op programs have been supporting student entrepreneurial efforts by approving entrepreneurial ventures for co-op credit. Students often create their own business as part of an entrepreneurial co-op program where they receive guidance and support from faculty members and local startup communities such as incubators. Some of these programs also provide funds to the students to work on their ventures. CAFCE recommends that SWILP funds in the form of a grant be made available to students who are looking to start their own businesses during co-op work terms and other work-integrated learning opportunities. These ventures could be jointly approved by industry associations and post-secondary institutions and be made available to students participating in a recognized entrepreneurship program.

### **New streams for use of SWILP partnership funds**

In addition to the approved partnership activities, CAFCE would like to recommend a subset of additional activities that have the potential to improve access to work-integrated learning opportunities for under-represented populations and/or to better assess the impact of SWILP and other work-integrated learning programs at a national level.

### **National Data Collection on Work-Integrated Learning**

In order to truly understand the impact of SWILP and other work-integrated learning opportunities, we need better data on the types of WIL opportunities being completed by Canadian students. This call for better data on WIL has been made by many and was recently highlighted as a major recommendation to strengthen WIL in Ontario (Turcotte, Nichols, and Philipps, 2016). SWILP provides an opportunity to extend data collection beyond each province and to develop a national dataset on WIL. In 2016, CAFCE established a national statistics database for co-op programs in Canada. CAFCE collects information on the number of work terms completed by co-op students by discipline and include the following details: employer type and location, gender, citizenship status, salary, and co-op fees collected. This database could be expanded to collect information on various forms of WIL and could be used to determine baseline data, to track growth in WIL programs, and to analyze outcomes for participants (schools, students, and employers) of WIL.

### **National WIL Research Grant Program**

Better data is critical in the expansion of WIL programs but a national research grant program could truly help to advance our understanding of the impact of work-integrated learning on Canada's productivity and competitiveness. CAFCE proposes the establishment of a National WIL Research Grant program under the partnership stream of SWILP. These grant funds could be made available for industry/post-secondary institution partnerships to explore the impact of SWILP projects and/or to investigate issues related to WIL program development, sustainability or outcomes. CAFCE recommends 10 grants per year with a value of \$25,000 - \$50,000 each.

## **Access programs to better prepare under-represented populations for the workforce**

The enhanced SWILP wage subsidies for under-represented populations acknowledge the challenges that some Canadian students face in accessing WIL opportunities. While enhanced wage subsidies may increase access for under-represented populations, additional academic programming and/or scaffolded, shorter duration WIL opportunities may assist under-represented populations in being ready to take on the full-time, 16 week employment required for to qualify for the enhanced SWILP wage subsidy. Many schools across Canada have successfully developed such programming for their students and see improved employment outcomes for students who participate in this supplemental programming. A few examples follow:

- Some schools have developed career training courses for international students or students who are unable to secure a first work term. Students who participate in these programs complete career assessments, develop career goals, learn to market themselves, how to network effectively and develop skills for long-term employment success. Completion of these kinds of career training courses assist students in effectively securing employment for subsequent work terms.
- One school assists students who are struggling with first-work term employment by arranging a series of shorter term work experiences (4- 5 weeks) with multiple employers. These short work experiences are supplemented with intensive additional training to ensure the students are prepared for their multiple work experiences and ultimately better equipped to market themselves and their skills in future work terms.
- Some schools offer part-time or short term work opportunities to students with disabilities or other access challenges

CAFCE recommends that SWILP partnership funds be dedicated for the development of resources and scaffolded WIL programming to help under-represented students prepare for full-time, 16 week work-integrated learning opportunities

CAFCE would be pleased to speak to or provide additional information on any of above listed SWILP related recommendations or other budgetary initiatives related to work-integrated learning. Please contact [cafce@cafce.ca](mailto:cafce@cafce.ca) for further information.

## **References**

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