



**CASA | ACAE**

Canadian Alliance of  
Student Associations

Alliance canadienne des  
associations étudiantes

Ms. Hilary Smyth, Clerk  
Standing Committee on Science and Research  
House of Commons  
Ottawa ON K1A 0A6

Greetings Ms. Smyth,

On behalf of the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA), I would like to provide the committee with further figures and information regarding its study of graduate scholarship and post-doctoral fellowship programs. Some of these figures come at request of members, and others will more clearly contextualize comments made during my appearance before the committee.

In my testimony, I was asked a question by Mr. Soroka regarding quantifying the economic loss associated with lost researchers and committed to follow up with yourself. We unfortunately are unable to find robust publically available data that accurately estimates this loss.

Mr. Soroka also inquired as to the levels of graduate and post-graduate funding and whether the lack of funding specifically dissuades individuals from entering graduate educational programs.

We have found that beyond funding influencing *where* students choose to pursue graduate education<sup>1</sup>, many sources recommend that research funding is a factor to consider in deciding *whether* an individual should pursue graduate education at all.<sup>2</sup> We would direct any interested members to a study from the Canadian Journal of

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.universityaffairs.ca/career-advice/graduate-matters/canada-vs-the-u-s-where-should-you-attend-grad-school/>

<sup>2</sup><https://concordia.ab.ca/student-services/career-services/career-resources/career-development-resources/things-to-consider-before-applying-to-graduate-school/>



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Higher Education of the Statistics Canada Youth In Transition study cohort that suggests tens of thousands of Canadians each year do not undergo post-secondary education for financial reasons.<sup>3</sup> And while Canadian data for graduate students is less readily available, a study from the United Kingdom government Office of Students found marked increases in graduate student uptake upon expanding financial resources available to students, especially among traditionally marginalized groups.<sup>4</sup>

We were also asked about the impact of tuition on the accessibility of graduate education. We have observed a growing student debt load of graduate students over the 2000-2010 period.<sup>5</sup> And since then, in 2015 graduate students have been taking on increasing levels of debt, with the average student graduating with a debt of \$28,000 (Master's) or \$33,000 (PhD), including 41% of Master's students and 54% of PhD students who graduate with large debt (\$25,000 and above)<sup>6</sup>. There is also the troubling rise in reliance on private loans to supplement lack of financial aid options for grad students<sup>7</sup>.

This issue is in part due to the inability of graduate students to access the Canadian student aid program afforded to undergraduates and college students.<sup>8</sup>

We would finally like to address another issue that we have recently highlighted before another committee, which is the relevance of support for graduate and

<sup>3</sup>[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/347526534\\_Access\\_and\\_Barriers\\_to\\_Postsecondary\\_Education\\_Evidence\\_from\\_the\\_Youth\\_in\\_Transition\\_Survey](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/347526534_Access_and_Barriers_to_Postsecondary_Education_Evidence_from_the_Youth_in_Transition_Survey)

<sup>4</sup><https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/the-effect-of-postgraduate-loans>

<sup>5</sup>[https://assets.nationbuilder.com/casaacae/pages/1307/attachments/original/1500482296/Investing\\_in\\_Innovators\\_CASA's\\_Vision\\_for\\_Research\\_and\\_Innovation\\_in\\_Post-Secondary\\_Education.pdf?1500482296#page=8](https://assets.nationbuilder.com/casaacae/pages/1307/attachments/original/1500482296/Investing_in_Innovators_CASA's_Vision_for_Research_and_Innovation_in_Post-Secondary_Education.pdf?1500482296#page=8)

<sup>6</sup><https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl/en/tv.action?pid=3710003601&pickMembers%5B0%5D=1.1&pickMembers%5B1%5D=3.1&cubeTimeFrame.startYear=2015&cubeTimeFrame.endYear=2015&referencePeriods=20150101%2C20150101>

<sup>7</sup>

<sup>8</sup><https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl/en/tv.action?pid=3710003601&pickMembers%5B0%5D=1.1&pickMembers%5B1%5D=3.3&cubeTimeFrame.startYear=2000&cubeTimeFrame.endYear=2015&referencePeriods=20000101%2C20150101>

<sup>9</sup><https://www.canada.ca/en/services/benefits/education/student-aid/grants-loans/full-time.html>



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post-doctoral research as it pertains to Indigenous researchers and research for Indigenous communities. In particular we would like to highlight an obstacle to

It is essential that Indigenous researchers are able to conduct crucial research in, and with, their communities. The *Subject Matter Eligibility Criteria* for SSHRC should be revisited to ensure that Indigenous research proposals are equally eligible for funding<sup>9</sup>. Addressing this and other Indigenous research obstacles can be found on page 11 of our linked brief.<sup>10</sup>

Finally, we wish to emphasize an element from our initial remarks, which all work in tandem. Our recommendations to improve Government of Canada's Graduate Scholarship and Post-Doctoral Fellowship Programs include :

- The addition of student seats on the Tri-Council via legislation;
- Increases in grants to increase the number of available awards;
- Increases in grants to increase the total value of awards, indexed to inflation.

I would like to thank you for the invitation to participate, and we remain available to answer any further questions committee members may have regarding our testimony.

Sincerely,

Mackenzy Metcalfe

Executive Director

Canadian Alliance of Student Associations

<sup>9</sup>

[https://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/funding-financement/apply-demande/background-renseignements/selecting\\_agency-choisir\\_organisme\\_subventionnaire-eng.aspx](https://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/funding-financement/apply-demande/background-renseignements/selecting_agency-choisir_organisme_subventionnaire-eng.aspx)

<sup>10</sup>[https://assets.nationbuilder.com/casaacae/pages/3561/attachments/original/1681748712/Reclaiming\\_and\\_Reimagining\\_-\\_Post\\_Secondary\\_Accessibility\\_for\\_Indigenous\\_Learners.pdf?1681748712#page=11](https://assets.nationbuilder.com/casaacae/pages/3561/attachments/original/1681748712/Reclaiming_and_Reimagining_-_Post_Secondary_Accessibility_for_Indigenous_Learners.pdf?1681748712#page=11)