



## Federal budget 2008 and Post-secondary Education

### What's in the budget?

- Converting the Canadian Millennium Scholarship Program to a Canada Student Grant Program with the existing \$350-million investment in 2009–10 rising to \$430 million in 2012–13.
- \$123 million over four years to streamline and the Canada Student Loans Program.
- Increasing limits Registered Education Savings Plans.
- \$28 million over two years for new scholarships for Canadian and international doctoral students, and support for Canadian graduate students to study abroad.

In addition, the government affirmed its announcements in the 2007 budget to provide \$800 million per year, starting in 2008–09 and growing by 3 per cent annually, for post-secondary infrastructure contained in the Canada Social Transfer.

### What does it mean?

The grant program is a step in the right direction, but it simply consolidates money from existing programs so there is no real new support this for undergraduate students who in the current year faced average tuition fees of \$5,447. It is good news that there has been no announcement concerning income contingent loans.

We need funding that will improve access to post-secondary education and ameliorate working and studying conditions on campus. In 2000, a

comprehensive study of this issue at universities across Canada, commissioned by the Canadian Association of University Business Officers, estimated that it would cost \$3.58 billion to address deferred maintenance. It has only deteriorated from that time and an update of the study based on 2006-07 data will surely show the crisis on our campuses.

### What would be better choices?

The government could create a separate transfer for post-secondary education to help improve accountability and transparency. Without accountability the privatization of our universities will persist. The impact of tuition user fees and corporate infiltration on the university community spills over to everyone as does the privatization of the work of support and academic employees. The Alternative Federal Budget called for an immediate \$432 million transfer governed by a new Post-Secondary Education Act with it rising to \$2.4 billion by 2010-11.

Strikes and strike threats have been prevalent in the university sector in the past year with the struggle for funding for fair wages and job security as issues for many locals. Universities need a stable base of public funding and a legislative framework so they can become revitalized the public accessible institutions instead of reflecting a competitive corporate model.

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