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# BUDGET SUBMISSION 2023



# LETTER FROM APSN CHAIR ANNETTE TRIMBEE

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Dear Members of the Legislative Assembly,

The Alberta Post-Secondary Network represents Alberta's 26 publicly funded post-secondary institutions. Those institutions play a central role in the economic and social prosperity of our province. Alberta's universities, polytechnics and colleges equip individuals to become innovators and leaders with the knowledge and skill to ensure the continued success of Alberta's key sectors – such as agriculture, energy, and health. We prepare the next generation of employees and entrepreneurs – and fuel the industries of the future.



It has been a challenging few years as we have navigated through global changes in the delivery of post secondary education brought about by the pandemic, technological changes and increasing international and national competition. We met the challenges of decreased funding by cutting our cost per student and finding new more cost-effective ways to deliver our programs.

We have also met shifting social and cultural needs, as we have worked to tackle the challenges associated with mental health, which is a growing concern since the pandemic. We have embraced our role as partners in reconciliation, as we build new programs and services that embrace and encourage our indigenous communities on campus. We have worked with student groups, faculty and experts to create new tools to tackle gender based sexual violence on campus.

We have also strengthened our relationship with industry and business. We have an ongoing project with the Alberta Chambers of Commerce to identify long term labour demands and adjust our programming to meet it, while also developing new experiential learning opportunities through work-integrated learning. This will ultimately allow the post-secondary system to be informed by some of the best labour market information in the country. The Business Council of Alberta recently released its "Defining the Decade" report which recognized the incredible contributions and critical role post-secondary plays in our economy and meeting the challenges of the future.

We have done all of this, while continuing to work with students, faculty and staff to deliver one of the world's best post-secondary educations.

As we move forward, we want to partner with the government to tackle the challenges our province faces and to seize the unique opportunities that are emerging. We present these proposals for Budget 2023 with the goal of being an active partner in shaping Alberta's future.

While our individual membership will have unique individual needs to meet, this submission represents our shared needs as a system.

Dr. Annette Trimbee  
Chair, Alberta Post-Secondary Network  
President and Vice Chancellor, MacEwan University

# INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS FOR TODAY'S CHALLENGES

Alberta's post-secondary institutions are leaders in innovation, and recognize the important role they can play in proposing solutions to the challenges we face as a province. Each of our members have unique strengths and capabilities that contribute to the diversity of our system. That diversity is our greatest strength as we collaborate to tackle today's challenges.

## **INTERNATIONAL TALENT**

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Alberta's booming economy has created an increased demand for people across our economy, and the need for workers has never been higher. We need to attract talent from around the world to come to Alberta to work and build a future for themselves.

### **APSN IS OFFERING A SOLUTION:**

- **Government commits to providing resources to Alberta's post-secondary institutions and industry to do on-site skills validation.** Working with industry, the post-secondary institutions could provide experienced knowledgeable professionals to work with business to assess the skill level of a worker on site with business. This approach would prevent fraud, provide reliable assessments and get more workers into their areas of expertise more quickly.
- **That the Government partners with post-secondary and the federal government to develop a strategy to attract more international students into the skilled trades and apprenticeship programs and all post-secondary programs.** Utilizing existing programs and partnerships such as the Alberta Advantage Immigration Program, we would like to develop strategies to attract international students into high demand programs.
- **That the Government continues to work with the federal government to reduce wait times for international students to receive their visas.** Post-Secondary institutions across Alberta have done good work to attract international students to Alberta, but often these students are delayed by the backlog of approvals for student visas with the federal government. This can cause disruptions in planning and resource allocation and prevent capable students from receiving their post-secondary education in a timely manner.

## HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS

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Our healthcare workers have been heroes throughout the pandemic, as they worked long shifts to meet an ever-increasing demand as people suffered the impacts of COVID-19. But this increased demand also showed the strains in our system, and the needs for more spaces. As the government moves forward with its plans to increase primary care spaces in Alberta's system, the post-secondary system knows the demands for skilled health care workers will grow.

Across Alberta, our members are training healthcare workers of some kind. Whether its nursing assistants, lab technicians, paramedics, doctors, nurses, nurse practitioners or others. Our diverse system has an essential role in growing and strengthening our healthcare system.

### APSN IS OFFERING A SOLUTION:

- **Calling on the government to fund the development and implementation of a Health Care Training Action Plan.** This plan would be developed in partnership between Advanced Education, Skilled Trades and Professions, Alberta Health Services, licensing bodies and Alberta's post-secondary institutions. The plan would take a complete look at the current and future demands of the system, and how we can make sure we are getting the health care professionals we need for the system to stay strong for the future. One approach would be to create a series of smaller discussions on different segments of the health care system which could be combined after to create a total picture.
- **Build immediate capacity now by supporting additional spaces at post secondary institutions for front line focused health care programs.** There is tremendous interest in the many health care focused programs across the post secondary system, but there are only so many seats available in many of these programs. Strong support from the government could allow institutions to increase availability in these programs in the short term to meet the immediate need while a long-term solution is developed.

## MENTAL HEALTH

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The conversations around mental health have grown louder and louder in recent years and we have seen that on our campuses. With the return to in-person learning, we have seen a spike in demand for mental health services on many of our campuses, and the demands on those resources have grown with time.

### APSN RECOMMENDS:

- **The government works with post-secondary institutions to ensure they are properly resourced to support the mental health of our students, staff and faculty.** Every campus and region will have unique needs and challenges, and will be subject to differing mental health challenges. Developing a robust response framework will be important to meet those shifting diverse needs and protect the mental health of everyone on our campuses. For the last few years funding has remained flat despite increased demand and enrollment growth pressures.

## INNOVATING ALBERTA'S ECONOMIC FUTURE

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Innovation is more than just new technology, it is finding new approaches and solutions to tackle new and emerging challenges as the world changes around us. It is seizing opportunities created by innovative minds working in fields across our economy. Innovation is not an option in today's global economy. Places that do not embrace innovation and change get left behind. Alberta has long been a leader in Canada on innovation, from our early investment in the oil sands to our work on nanotechnology and quantum science. But we cannot stop now, we need to continue to invest in innovation.

Post-Secondary institutions create disruptors that transform technology and everyday life. And they have an important role in shaping our economy's future.

### APSN IS CALLING FOR:

- **The Government to fund development and implementation of an Alberta Data Strategy.** The Business Council of Alberta in its “Defining the Decade” report proposed the development of an Alberta Data Strategy to support innovation and investment. The post-secondary system can play a role in the development of such a strategy in partnership with business, industry and government.
- **The Ministry of Technology and Innovation to enhance support for the work of existing regional innovation initiatives.** In regions across the province the local government, business and post-secondary are already partnering to support and encourage new and exciting innovation. Whether it is the Edmonton Regional Innovation Network, Hydrogen Centre of Excellence, Innovate Calgary or others, great work is happening to attract, support and encourage innovation.
- **The Government to continue to invest in micro-credential and work integrated learning projects across Alberta.** Micro-credentials and work-integrated learning have been an innovative new approach to training Alberta's workforce. They provide alternatives to those seeking to upgrade their skills to meet new and evolving needs in the workplace.

## JUNIOR HIGH AND HIGH SCHOOL

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The government has expressed a desire to create better pathways starting in junior high and high school for students to pursue a skills education in a field that may interest them. Our shared goal is to ensure more and more of our young people enter into the post-secondary system and realize that there is value in any form that many take. Whether you want to be a welder or pipefitter, doctor or nurse, artist or IT professional, all of these roles are critical to Alberta's economy. We hold all education in equal esteem, whether it is a trades certificate, a diploma, or a degree. It is about the next generation pursuing its passions.

### APSN WANTS TO:

- **Work with Skilled Trades and Professions, Advanced Education, Education and applicable stakeholder groups to facilitate better educational opportunities in skilled trades and other professions at the junior high and high school level.** Whether it's creating pathways for our skilled trades professionals to share their passion for the trades with junior high and high school students or ramping up interests in the many health care professions; the post secondary system is prepared to be a partner in developing innovative programs and other solutions to move this work forward.
- **Work with the provincial government and relevant post-secondary institutions to develop a pathway for journeypersons to instruct at the junior high and high school level.** Young people have a passion for technology, mechanics, wood working, and many other skilled trades at a young age. With the rapid change of technology and high demand in the private sector, it would be beneficial to create pathways for qualified journeypersons to become instructors at the junior high and high school level. They can then bring their skills and knowledge to junior high and high school students to encourage their passion and guide them towards skilled trades education and apprenticeships.
- **Ensure all Albertans have equal access to opportunities for exposure to careers by funding our post-secondary institutions for dual credit and creative projects with rural high schools.** Many of our members want to continue to develop innovative programs and partnerships that will ensure our rural and remote schools can provide diverse opportunities for their students.

# STRENGTHENING THE POST-SECONDARY SYSTEM

Alberta post-secondary institutions have, in recent years, navigated through global changes in the delivery of post-secondary education brought about by the pandemic, technological changes and increasing international and national competition. In the years ahead, our population will continue to grow, technology will continue to evolve, and the costs and demands for post-secondary will increase. For Alberta to continue to have a world-class post-secondary system and keep more students in Alberta, we need to make a strong investment in the system.

## TARGETED ENROLLMENT SUPPORTS

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In the short-term, Alberta's economy has seen an increasing demand for workers in key sectors of the economy. Industry is desperate for more skilled Alberta workers, and the post-secondary system is working diligently to train them. However, we are constrained by the number of spaces available.

### APSN IS CALLING FOR:

- **The government to continue to invest in targeted enrollment support for high demand programs.** This will allow post-secondary institutions to create the additional capacity needed to get more students enrolled in these high demand programs. Funding impacts the number of spaces in any given program institutions can create. With strong funding we can ramp up the number of spaces in high demand programs.
- **The government to fund the true costs of delivering high demand programs.** Many of the skilled trades and professional skills programs require specialized space and specialized equipment which is often constantly evolving. All of this leads to high costs for the delivery of these programs, which is often above and beyond the costs of instruction. The unintended consequence of the current funding approach is that as post-secondary's try and meet demand it can reduce capacity to deliver other programs which can also be in high demand.

## SUSTAINABLE POST-SECONDARY SYSTEM

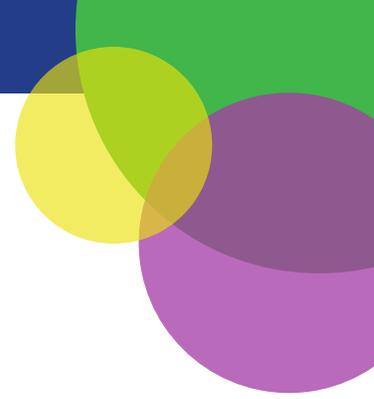
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Post-Secondary education is a key pillar of Alberta's economy. The students who emerge from our institutions make up the core of Alberta's labour forces across all industries. They are welders, pipe fitters, plumbers, technicians, IT professionals, entrepreneurs, scientists, doctors, nurses, artists, lawyers, and educators. To continue to meet not just today's demand, but the demands of the future we need continued investment.

### APSN IS CALLING FOR:

- **The government to support the proposal from the Business Council of Alberta for the development and implementation of an Alberta Workforce Strategy.** The "Defining the Decade" report proposed the development of an Alberta Workforce Strategy which would ensure a coordinated delivery of education and skills training. The post-secondary system would like to partner with business and the government to develop this strategy.
- **The government to commit to stable base funding for post-secondary, which recognizes growing demand.** The base funding provided by the government has a tremendous impact on the number of seats available year to year for Alberta students. It also greatly impacts the amount those institutions need to charge students through tuition and ancillary fees. With a large cohort of youth coming up from secondary education in the coming years, it is going to be more critical than ever that post-secondary's have the funding needed to create spaces that will allow those students to remain in Alberta.
- **A strong investment in capital maintenance and renewal.** Alberta is a young province with a young well educated population that drives demand. While post-secondary institutions need new facilities to meet growing demand, there is an equally important need to invest in the infrastructure that is already in place. In some cases buildings are hitting the 50 and 60 year mark and are in need of basic maintenance and, in many cases, renewal to meet today's needs. APSN is working with its members to review the existing infrastructure needs of our members to create a strong picture of the need across the province.

- **The government to remove red tape so institutions can better utilize their own resources.** One challenge that the post-secondary system has faced are some government regulations that have impacted institutions' ability to utilize their own source revenue. Some regulations have also created hurdles for post secondaries' ability to recruit and retain top talent in everything from IT services to senior leadership.
- **Government to match charitable giving that is targeted to increase affordability for our learners.** Post-secondary institutions work with some remarkably charitable individuals across Alberta who frequently donate money for student bursaries and scholarships. The government recently announced it will match donations to Alberta's food banks to encourage more giving. This approach would see the government matching charitable donations made to post-secondary institutions for bursaries and scholarships, making post-secondary more affordable for students struggling with costs.
- **The Government to continue to invest in knowledge-based education through the social sciences and the arts.** We know more than ever that business and industry are looking for students not just with skills in math, sciences, but also with social science and arts education as well. The knowledge economy is growing rapidly and many businesses today want employees with diverse skill sets.
- **Investment in IT infrastructure and a recognition of this infrastructure as a capital asset that requires maintenance and renewal.** Investments in IT infrastructure are essential to provide the best possible experience for our learners. In a rapidly changing technological landscape, it's essential that post secondary institutions keep up with shifting practices and demand. This includes shifts in delivery methods to keep up with competition in other regions of Canada and around the world.
- **Continue to support the work APSN is doing with the Alberta Chambers of Commerce on the collection and utilization of labour market information.** To ensure greater alignment between post-secondary programming with the current and future talent requirements of Alberta Business, we have partnered with the Chamber of Commerce with support from the Government of Alberta to ensure Alberta will be informed by the best Labour Market information in the country.



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