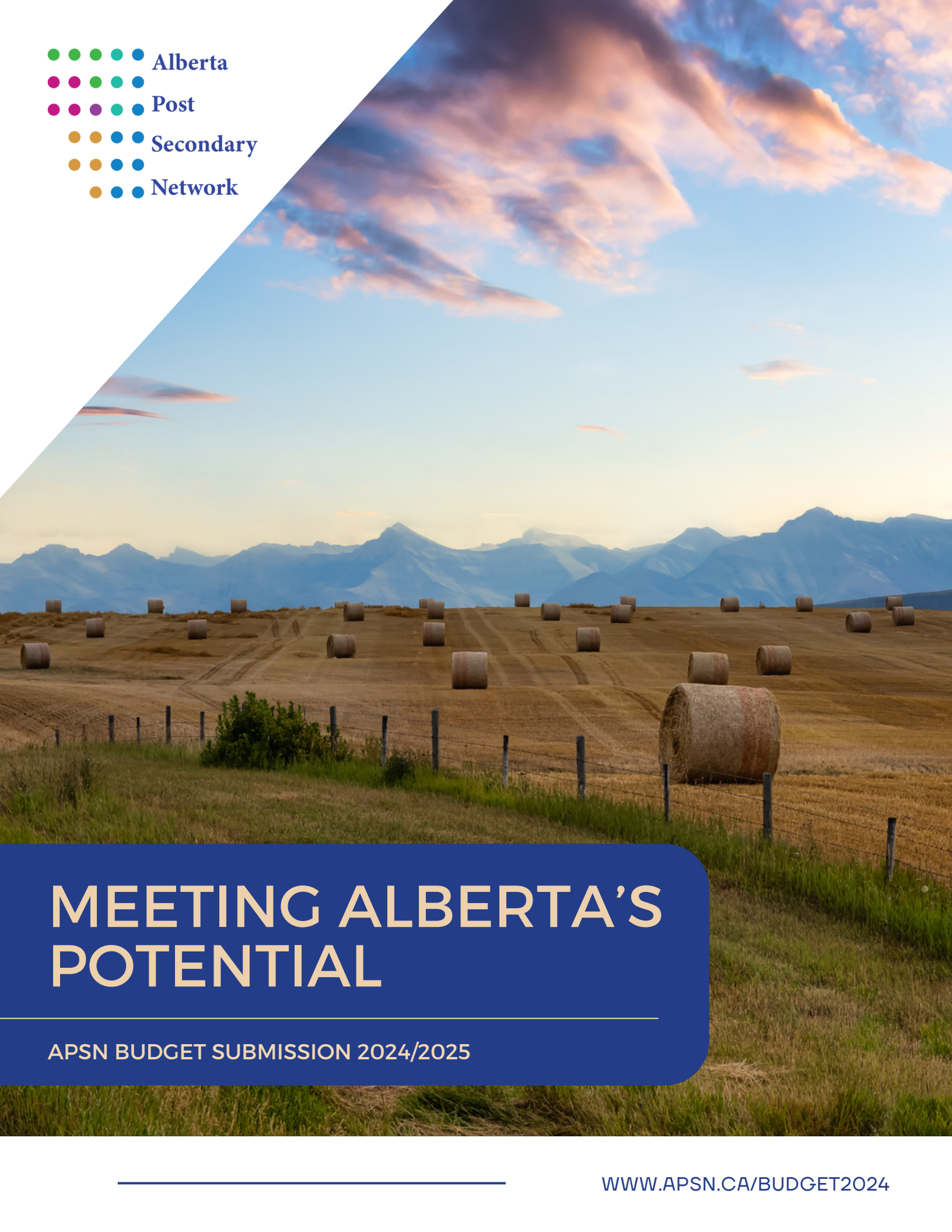


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# MEETING ALBERTA'S POTENTIAL

APSN BUDGET SUBMISSION 2024/2025



## LETTER FROM THE CHAIR, DR. ANNETTE TRIMBEE

As global demand for talent increases, Alberta graduates continue to be leaders in business, industry, health care, skilled trades, science and many other fields. Our students know when they graduate from one of Alberta's 26 publicly funded post-secondary institutions those credentials are recognized by companies here in Alberta and around the world. We offer high quality education.



Our post-secondary system is relevant and aligned with Alberta's ambition. Our institutions are offering solutions and attracting cutting edge investment in areas like quantum computing, nano-technology, bioresearch, artificial intelligence, technology and social innovation and are pioneering new processes to improve outcomes. Across the system arts education is meeting the needs of a growing creative industry in Alberta while skilled trades programs are pioneering in areas like hydrogen, agriculture and business. All of this as the government strives to expand and diversify Alberta's economy in a highly competitive environment for skilled talent..

The Government has outlined a bold agenda on the economy, mental health, health care, the environment and affordability. The post-secondary system is supporting that work on multiple fronts including:

- Training nurses to meet the needs of Alberta's health care system.
- Training mental health professionals to fill the new spaces the government is creating for mental health and addiction services.
- Developing and expanding programs to help new Albertans have their skills recognized in Alberta.
- Growing spaces in skilled trades and professions to meet the demand of our construction, transportation, energy, education and advanced manufacturing industries.
- Working with the Alberta Chambers of Commerce and Industry to develop some of the best labour statistics in the world and help students identify the skills they need to succeed.
- Attracting new investment through partnerships with the technology sector and growing Alberta's tech sector.
- Educating artists, graphic designers, composers, set designers and others to participate in Alberta's growing creative industries.

And there is more that can be done. The Post-Secondary system is ready and willing to work with the government to ensure Alberta meets its potential. To do this we want to work with the Government to meet the needs of Albertans and grow the system to meet the needs ahead.

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



## **AFFORDABLE, ACCESSIBLE & HIGH QUALITY EDUCATION**

Alberta is booming, our population is growing, people are moving from across Canada and around the world to live here. The government is working hard to grow our economy and make Alberta attractive to investment and growth.

They are succeeding, and as a result Alberta is projected to add 35,000 students, or roughly the population of Spruce Grove, to the public system by 2030. These new students will need educators, support staff, classroom space, lab spaces, specialized equipment, workshops and many other facilities and supports to accommodate their learning as they seek to turn their passions into careers.

The data shows that when students' study here, they stay here as they build their careers. Alberta needs these students to keep their talent and skills here.

To meet Alberta's potential in the years ahead APSN members suggest:

- **That the Post-Secondary Operations Grant is increased, utilizing inflation plus population growth to determine the amount of the increase.**
  - Because of Alberta's success at attracting more families to Alberta, the student-aged population is growing faster than the average population, which the government recently acknowledged in the Speech from the Throne. APSN is recommending that funding be increased by calculating the inflation rate plus growth in the student population.

### **Why the Operations Grant?**

The Operations Grant offers post-secondary institutions the maximum flexibility to meet the needs of the communities they serve. Our post-secondary system is diverse and each campus – large, small, rural and urban – meets different needs. By increasing the operations grant, it will allow institutions to plan further ahead, grow programs, and more quickly react to shifting needs.

This allows institutions to cut through the red tape and grow the in-demand programs in real time as they look at enrollment figures and trends on the ground.

- **Advanced Education works with post-secondary institutions to identify a medium-term funding system to meet the demands of post-secondary for the decade ahead.**
  - Post-secondary institutions can identify existing capacity, growth trends and pressures and develop a projection of what their costs will be for the next 10 years.
- **Alberta needs to invest in its apprenticeship programs, to expand opportunities and meet the growing demand from business and industry.**
- **The government make increased investments in foundational learning which will support increasing the labour supply in Alberta's economy.** As Alberta continues to attract talent from around the world and as Albertans seek to reskill, the demand for foundational learning has increased dramatically.
- **That the Government of Alberta provide backfill support for post-secondary institutions on an equitable basis to offset the tuition cap.** The post-secondary system supports the government's efforts to address the current affordability challenge for students. For post-secondary institutions to continue to meet the growing demand for seats, the government must provide some backfill to make up for the decrease in tuition dollars.

Tuition fee increases are capped at 2% for the 2024-25 fiscal year, while Alberta CPI is currently near 4%. This difference will need to be offset by an increase in the operating grant.

Salary settlements across Canada are tracking at above the current inflation rates – primarily to compensate for the 8% to 9% inflationary increases in 2022.



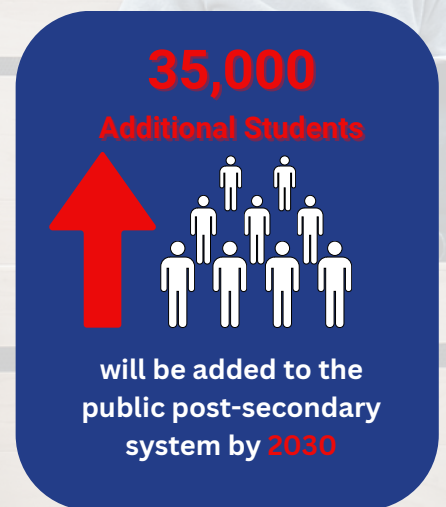
## MEETING ALBERTA'S BOOMING LABOUR DEMAND

The government is working hard to address Alberta's massive labour needs and has begun to close the gap on the 100,000 job vacancies that existed in 2022. Projections show, however, the demand will continue to increase; according to Statistics Canada, we will see shortages of 1700 to 3750 graduates every year by 2028.

APSN is working with the Alberta Chambers of Commerce on strengthening economic competitiveness by aligning post-secondary programming to the current and future needs of Alberta's business community and expanding experiential learning opportunities.

This work is critical but more is required to meet Alberta's potential:

- **Extend targeted investment in high demand programs.** The government's commitment in recent years has helped the post-secondary system grow spaces in high demand areas. While a strong investment in the Post Secondary Operations Grant is critical, targeted funding will continue to be necessary.
- **When investing in the skilled trades, it is critical that the cost of specialized facilities and equipment is considered.** The true cost of delivering these programs goes beyond hiring instructors; it can often require large industrial facilities, specialized equipment, and safety equipment that is not often required in other programs. This must be factored in when allocating funding to grow spaces in the skilled trades.
- **Increased funding for the infrastructure grant to address deferred maintenance on Alberta's post-secondary campuses.** While institutions can take short term measures to extend the life of some facilities, many have facilities now that require more extensive updates. Without these updates, facilities may need to be taken out of operation which will impact the capacity of institutions to accept students into programs.
- **Encourage the government to continue to expand dual credit programs to enhance student exposure to the trades.**





## RESEARCH INNOVATION AND COMMERCIALIZATION

Post-Secondary Institutions are a bedrock foundation for a knowledge-based economy. The opportunities for Alberta's economy to expand now and into the future are knowledge-based, and will require a cadre of educated and skilled professionals who can apply their skills in all sectors of the economy.

It is critical that our post-secondary institutions, large, small, urban and rural, can access every dollar possible to expand educational and research opportunities for Albertans. In recent years both the provincial and federal governments have made investments in innovation and research. The challenge in recent years has been that federal programs often require some form of matching funding from the provincial government. Provincial grants, like the Research Capacity Grant, exist, but do not always provide the flexibility to be leveraged to secure additional grant funding.

To realize Alberta's potential and grow our research and innovation capacity, the APSN membership recommends:

- **The Ministry of Innovation and Technology works with our members to develop a matching grant pool to enable Alberta to maximize access to research funding from other levels of government.**
- **Funding should include a carve out for infrastructure upgrades that may be needed to pursue grant dollars.** This could include equipment, lab modernizations and IT upgrades, among others. These can sometimes be required when pursuing research projects.



The Central Alberta Child Advocacy Center (CACAC) staff in the recently completed Sheldon Kennedy Centre of Excellence on Red Deer Polytechnic Campus.

This facility is the first of its kind. By bringing strategic partners together under one roof, and providing the personalized, treatment-focused space that they need, staff are able to better respond to the challenges presented by mental health concerns, child abuse, child sexual exploitation, and other child and youth related traumas.



## SUPPORTS FOR STUDENTS

Students are at the core of everything the post-secondary system does. Ensuring that students have the best possible experience is key and in some cases that means having strong mental health supports and assistance available on campus. This government has made historic investments in mental health, and the post-secondary system will continue to support this work both on campus and by training the professionals we need to support these programs.

APSN members are recommending:

- **The government increases funding for campus based mental health supports.** Post-secondary institutions have struggled to meet the basic demand for mental health support on campus, as demand has dramatically increased since COVID. Campuses continue to provide frontline support for their students and will continue to do so, but increased demand is straining existing support.
- **The government, through the Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions, work with post-secondary students to develop programs to help students secure off campus mental health supports.** On campus supports are better suited for helping students facing stress or short-term mental health challenges. When students identify or develop more severe diagnoses, it is important that there are pathways for post-secondary institutions to help students transition from short-term help to longer term support.
- **The Ministry of Mental Health and addictions work with PSIs to develop a new program that will allow residents undergoing longer term rehabilitation treatment or mental health care to take programs and micro-credentials through post-secondary institutions.** As people try to recover from long-term addiction or are undergoing medium term mental health treatment, part of the anxiety they may feel is about securing employment or reintegrating into daily life. The opportunity to work on a micro-credential or other educational program could help with those anxieties and set them up for greater success down the road.

Did you know?

70%

of students at Athabasca University are the **FIRST** in their family to attend a Post-Secondary Institution.

Did you know?

66%

of students at Athabasca University are supporting families while pursuing their studies.



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