

APRIL 22 2020: UCRU PRAISES FEDERAL GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCEMENT FOR STUDENTS AFFECTED BY COVID-19

Ottawa, ON - This morning, the Canadian government released a nine billion dollar student support package to help students who are facing financial insecurity as a result of COVID-19. The Undergraduates of Canadian Research-Intensive Universities (UCRU) is extremely grateful that the government implemented many of the recommendations from our report released last Thursday, including the implementation of the Canada Emergency Student Benefit, and the doubling of the Canada Student Grants Program. This is a win for current students, incoming students, and new graduates. This package is an incredibly important announcement that will bring financial relief to hundreds of thousands of Canadian students. We praise the government for this announcement that will ensure students can pay their rent, afford groceries, and return to their studies in the fall.

Last week, UCRU released a report that outlined gaps students faced in existing government supports. Over 3000 students told us about their financial challenges in light of COVID-19. We found 73% were worried about being able to afford living expenses in the immediate future, 79% were worried about returning to school in the fall, and 83% were not eligible for the Canada Emergency Response Benefit announced in March. To remedy these gaps, we called on the government to:

- Distribute the Canada Emergency Response Benefit or an alternative summer income supplement to students and new graduates to fill the illustrated gaps
- Distribute an emergency fund to be administered by post-secondary institutions to remedy any remaining gaps
- Increase funding for Canada Student Grants Program
- Waive expected student and family contributions to the Canada Student Loans and Grants Program
- Enhance eligibility for Canada Student Grant Programs for students and families impacted by COVID-19

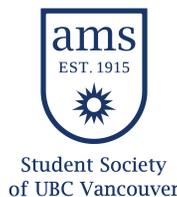
We are proud and relieved that the government listened to the voices of students and will be implementing four of our five recommendations. We also called on the government to recognize the precarious financial situations of students living with disabilities, students with dependents, and Indigenous students; we are extremely grateful for the government's recognition of their unique circumstances and that they are providing these students with the additional support they need. Finally, we were thrilled to see the expansion of research grants and fellowships and the creation of the Canada Student Service Grant to financially support those students who are giving back to their communities and supporting our society's response to COVID-19.

UCRU Chair and Vice President External of the Alma Mater Society at the University of British Columbia, Cristina Ilnitchi, applauded the actions taken by the government: “Thank you to Prime Minister Trudeau and Minister Qualtrough for listening to students and taking significant and timely action to support students in need across Canada,” said Ilnitchi, “the government has overwhelmingly addressed the concerns of the over two million post-secondary students nationwide.”

Today’s package complements previous government announcements to expand the Canada Summer Jobs Program and provide temporary relief on loan repayments to graduates. We are looking forward to the roll-out of the new Canada Emergency Student Benefit and for students to get the support they need as soon as possible,

UCRU would like to thank the Prime Minister and Minister Qualtrough, and all Members of Parliament and public servants that are working tirelessly to support Canadians throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. We look forward to continued collaboration with the government in the coming weeks and months.

The Undergraduates of Canadian Research-Intensive Universities is a pragmatic, evidence-driven advocacy alliance of nine student associations dedicated to high-quality, affordable and accessible education, and represents over 250,000 undergraduate university students across Canada.



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