



FEDERATION OF CANADIAN SECONDARY STUDENTS  
FÉDÉRATION DES ÉLÈVES DU SECONDAIRE AU CANADA

f /fcssfesc  
@fcssfesc  
@fcssfesc

# SUBMISSION TO 2023 FEDERAL PRE-BUDGET CONSULTATIONS

Standing Committee on Finance  
Sixth Floor, 131 Queen Street  
House of Commons  
Ottawa ON K1A 0A6  
Canada

## Introduction

As students attending publicly funded schools, we are aware and cognisant of the challenges that our peers are currently facing and will face as they enter the next chapter of their lives. To that end, we are presenting a series of six recommendations for consideration by the committee. We believe that these recommendations will benefit and support the next generation's mental health, well-being, and social-emotional development.

## About the Federation of Canadian Secondary Students

The Federation of Canadian Secondary Students / Fédération des élèves du secondaire au Canada (FCSS-FESC) is an entirely non-partisan youth-led charity. We were founded in 2012, incorporated in 2014, and gained tax-exempt charitable status in 2017. Over the FCSS-FESC's ten-year history, we have developed programs to support secondary students and advocate on matters relevant to secondary students.

☎ (289) 408-8600  
☎ (289) 408-8600

✉ hello-bonjour@fcss-fesc.ca  
🌐 www.fcss-fesc.ca

Registered charity in Canada  
No. 818506784 RR 0001

## Recommendations

- 1) That the Government of Canada invest an additional \$10 million in the Canada Summer Jobs program for the creation of opportunities specifically for Canadian secondary school students.
- 2) That the Government of Canada invest \$9 million in community centers for social support programs for youth and children with special needs.
- 3) That the Government of Canada invest an additional \$20 million to address systemic barriers to women's equality in STEM.
- 4) That the Government of Canada invest \$3.8 million in community center programs, therapy groups, as well as other educational mental health workshops that benefit Indigenous youth in the Territories.
- 5) That the Government of Canada invest \$3.5 million to educate students about underdiscussed global conflicts and atrocities.
- 6) That the Government of Canada invest \$16.5 million dollars over the next 5 years in the Connecting Communities Program.

(1) That the Government of Canada invest an additional \$10 million in the Canada Summer Jobs program for the creation of opportunities specifically for Canadian secondary school students.

The [Canada Summer Jobs](#) (CSJ) program provides summer employment opportunities to Canadian youth, building skills and experience for a successful transition to the labour market. Though the CSJ program is targeted for youth aged 15 to 30, Canadian secondary students (ages 15-18) are at a competitive disadvantage to 25-30 year olds who have several years of work experience and often one or more university degrees. At its very core, Canadian secondary students have the most potential to grow from this program, but due to the current funding structure, are least likely to benefit.

Based on previous government funding for the CSJ initiative, an additional [investment of \\$10 million](#) would create approximately 3,000 jobs for Canadian secondary students. This designated funding will promote equality of opportunity within the CSJ program and further the representation of youth voices, as outlined in the [Minister of Families, Children, and Social Development's Mandate Letter](#).

(2) That the Government of Canada invest \$9 million in community centers for social support programs for youth and children with special needs.

As of 2017, [546,410 Canadian youth](#) have special needs. These students are [bullied at higher rates](#) compared to those without special needs. They also experience [social exclusion](#), [feel isolated and feel less socially supported](#), in comparison to children without special needs. Social support programs will serve to be a great resource to make friends, improve their social skills, and build a sense of community. Social skills training programs have proved a high degree of effectiveness in [students' social interaction levels](#), with results lasting [months after the program](#). Moreover, a [review by the University of Toronto and New York University](#) concluded that mentoring students with disabilities results in many positive outcomes, including employment related improvements, academic improvement and psychosocial health benefits.

Funding, at a rate of approximately \$2,500 per community centre can be used to prepare materials for the program set up (ie. creating booklets, organizing a space, etc). These funds can subsidize the cost for the program, making it accessible for families who may not have the financial means to access similar paid supports.

### (3) That the Government of Canada invest an additional \$20 million to address systemic barriers to women's equality in STEM.

Women and Gender Equality Canada's (WAGE) *Women's Program* seeks to advance gender equality in Canada through funding to eligible organizations. The Women's Program funds projects that spread awareness regarding systemic barriers to women's equality in three priority areas, focusing on [violence termination, economic security and prosperity improvement, and leadership encouragement](#). Although the Women's Program has funded important gender equality programs in Canada, the program lacks action to address the gender gap in STEM workplaces.

Women and girls, especially in secondary school, should be encouraged to seek STEM careers in their post-secondary pathways. Additional funding of \$20 million would create approximately five years of support in the form of workshops, training, guest speakers, or paid job opportunities (e.g., internships).

### (4) That the Government of Canada invest \$3.8 million in community center programs, therapy groups, as well as other educational mental health workshops that benefit Indigenous youth in the Territories.

In Indigenous communities, suicide is the leading cause of death for young people aged 10-29. [Statistics Canada reports that suicide rates among Indigenous Youth are 5-7 times more likely than that of non-indigenous youth \(depending on their location\)](#). While mental health activists often advocate for the mental health concerns of urban students, there is a lack of service and support for the most vulnerable community—Indigenous youth—in the Territories. Specifically, in 2017, the government only spent 0.45% of the entire health care budget for the 4.6% Indigenous population, despite Indigenous youth having the highest suicide rates in the country.

The government should invest \$3.8 million into purchasing equipment, hiring staff, and maintaining free community-based programs that are dedicated to improving the well-being of Indigenous students in the Territories.

Through additional investments in northern community centers, Indigenous youth will have more accessible coping strategies and mental health support available to them outside of school. This investment supports the goal of investing in a Mental Health and Wellness Strategy outlined in the mandate letter for the [Minister of Indigenous Services](#).

## (5) That the Government of Canada invest \$3.5 million to educate students about underrepresented global conflicts and atrocities.

Continuing education about global conflicts and atrocities that are not covered in provincial curriculums would create a more understanding and inclusive minded Canadian society, reducing the xenophobia and hate crimes within our nation. This proposition is ever more relevant in light of the recent rise in [hate crimes against Canadian immigrants and refugees](#). This is of particular importance for new student refugees who suffer from both [post-migration discrimination and pre-migration trauma, which can have detrimental impacts on their academic success](#).

\$50,000 can be allocated to the development of functional website which will include information, and interactive virtual activities/lessons which teachers can virtually share with their students without program deliverers being in-person with students. The remaining \$2.95 million can be dedicated to implementing programs across Canada, with the allocation of the funds respective to the size of each province or territory's post-secondary student population. This program will be delivered by teams of program coordinators, special speakers, and presenters, who will travel from school to school on a request basis. Understanding these atrocities and having stories being told and heard is essential to eliminating stereotypes and misconstrued notions surrounding Canadian refugees and immigrants.

## (6) That the Government of Canada invest \$16.5 million dollars over the next 5 years in the Connecting Communities Program

According to [Statistics Canada](#), approximately 600,000 Canadians do not have access to the internet. In this new digital era, students depend on internet connection to complete their education. However, the current program only offers subsidized internet access and computer equipment to families receiving the maximum Canada Child Benefit and making less than \$30,000/year.

The additional funding would cover another 55,000 families and approximately [159,000 Canadians](#), the majority of whom are in school and whose families need financial support and internet access.

The improved quality of education would allow students to lift their families out of poverty and add many skilled young workers into the workforce, lowering the national unemployment rate. Investments in education have greatly increased economic growth and GDP, and supports the [development of impoverished communities](#). These additional investments in the Connecting Families initiative will help young Canadians who lack the basic necessities for education prepare for the future.



FEDERATION OF CANADIAN SECONDARY STUDENTS  
FÉDÉRATION DES ÉLÈVES DU SECONDAIRE AU CANADA

f /fcssfesc  
@fcssfesc  
@fcssfesc

On behalf of the Federation of Canadian Secondary Students, thank you for your consideration. We would sincerely value the opportunity to further discuss our recommendations and testify for members of the Standing Committee on Finance.

Respectfully submitted,

**Bruce Yu**

Executive Director / Directeur général

[bruce.yu@fcss-fesc.ca](mailto:bruce.yu@fcss-fesc.ca)

**Joshua Brown**

Chief Operations Officer / Chef des opérations

[joshua.brown@fcss-fesc.ca](mailto:joshua.brown@fcss-fesc.ca)

The Federation of Canadian Secondary Students / Fédération des élèves du secondaire au Canada (FCSS-FESC) extends its appreciation to the authors and editors of this brief.

They are: Ajayveer Bedi, Alexander Moghadam, Bruce Yu, Inaaya Iqbal, Joshua Brown, Kylie Yagi, Luca Pascuzzi, Peter Benevides, Rachel Strathdee, Rachel Zhang and Thivya Jeyapalan.