



JUL 25 2017



Mr. Alistair MacGregor, M.P.  
Cowichan-Malahat-Langford  
House of Commons  
519 Confederation Building  
OTTAWA ON K1A 0A6

Dear Mr. MacGregor:

Thank you for your letter of February 16, 2017, regarding the Post-Secondary Student Support Program with a specific reference to the 2% increase of annual funding. I apologize for the delay in responding.

Lack of adequate funding, lack of awareness about available resources and the inability to access loans are some of the main barriers to accessing post-secondary education identified by Indigenous students, according to research compiled by Statistics Canada, the Assembly of First Nations and the Department's own 2012 Summative Evaluation of the Post-Secondary Program.

Aware of the urgency to better meet the needs of Indigenous students, Budget 2017 committed the Government of Canada to undertake a comprehensive and collaborative review with Indigenous partners of all current federal programs that support Indigenous students who wish to pursue post-secondary education. The review will be an in-depth analysis of all post-secondary programs led by the Department and Employment and Social Development Canada to look at gaps, overlaps, barriers, and best practices, with a view to programming adaptations in the short, medium and long term. The objective of the review is to ensure that these programs meet the needs of individual students while supporting attendance at, and completion of, a post-secondary education. You can be assured that annual funding will be one of the issues tabled during the review.

The review will be undertaken in the spirit of reconciliation with a commitment to the renewed relationship with Indigenous Peoples and, as expressed by the Prime Minister in 2015, one based on the recognition of rights, respect, cooperation and partnership. The June 12, 2017, signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of Canada and the Assembly of First Nations was the third of three such events in 2017, which have established permanent bilateral mechanism processes to

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establish shared priorities and monitor progress going forward. In February 2017, the Prime Minister and the President of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami signed a declaration announcing the Inuit–Crown Partnership Committee and, in April 2017, the Prime Minister and the President of the Métis National Council signed the Canada–Métis Nation Accord. We are looking forward to taking a partnered approach to the review, in collaboration with regional Indigenous organizations and students in particular. Having these bilateral mechanism processes already established is optimal for engagement and partnership building during the review.

Budget 2017 proposes to increase funding to the Post-Secondary Student Support Program by \$90 million over two years, beginning in 2017–2018. This funding will support the post-secondary education financial needs of over 4,600 students over the two-year period. At present, Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada provides financial support to First Nation and Inuit organizations for eligible students pursuing a post-secondary education. In 2015–2016, the Department invested more than \$313 million in the Post-Secondary Student Support Program and the University College Entrance Preparation Program. This funding provided assistance to over 22,000 students.

In addition to the Post-Secondary Student Support Program, the Department provides funding to Indspire, a national and registered non-profit organization that invests in the education of Indigenous Peoples and provides post-secondary scholarships to First Nation and Inuit students. Budget 2017 proposes to provide Indspire with \$5 million per year for five years, starting in 2017–2020, conditional on Indspire raising \$3 million per year in matching funds from the private sector. In total, this will provide \$40 million over five years in bursaries and scholarships for more than 12,000 First Nation, Inuit and Métis students.

The Government of Canada is working hard to ensure that Indigenous youth have access to an education that encourages them to stay in school, graduate, and get the skills that they need to enter the labour market.

I welcome your involvement and that of all parliamentarians in the upcoming review of Indigenous post-secondary education.

Sincerely,



Hon. Carolyn Bennett, M.D., P.C., M.P.