
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills

Provincial Tuition Waiver Program expanded to former youth in care of all ages

VICTORIA – People looking to enrol in post-secondary education, who are former youth in care, will benefit from an expansion of the Provincial Tuition Waiver Program, which has launched for the fall semester.

“This program has made a massive and positive impact on so many peoples’ lives to shape their future without barriers, financial burden or worry,” said Selina Robinson, Minister of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills. “Expanding this program to all former youth in care will provide significant support to British Columbians to seize the opportunities in this changing economy while providing them with the skills and talent needed to build the lives they deserve.”

The Provincial Tuition Waiver Program for former youth in care has been expanded to include all former youth in care, regardless of age. The program is no longer capped on a person’s 27th birthday. This program is also available to those who turn or have turned 19 with B.C. children and family development ministry or Indigenous Child and Family Service Agency legal status, regardless of time spent in care.

“We want young people from care to have as many opportunities as possible when it comes to accessing post-secondary studies,” said Mitzi Dean, Minister of Children and Family Development. “We are breaking down barriers, making access to post-secondary education more equitable and providing holistic support to former youth in care across the province. The tuition waiver program, in addition to others under the Ministry of Children and Family Development’s Strengthening Abilities and Journeys of Empowerment Program, addresses a wide range of needs, enabling more adults to access supports to reach their full potential on their terms.”

Previously, tuition waiver recipients had to be under the age of 27 and had to have been in care for 24 months, consecutive or accumulative. Government has expanded the program to include former youth in care of all ages who have been in care for 24 months. In addition, those who turn or have turned 19 in care are eligible, regardless of time spent in care. The total provincial funding is \$19.2 million over three years.

Eligible former youth in care of any age can receive free tuition at all 25 public post-secondary institutions, the Native Education College and approved union-based trades training providers. This expansion also includes the introduction of a new \$3,500 grant to support educational costs, such as books, computers and supplies.

Approximately 2,300 students have accessed Provincial Tuition Waiver Program since its implementation in 2017, resulting in \$16.6 million in tuition and fees waived. The program

expansion is expected to support an additional 1,200 students who are currently enrolled in post-secondary programs and result in an estimated increase of 1,000 to 1,500 program participants per year. In total, this program extension will create opportunities for approximately 50,000 former youth in care in B.C.

The Provincial Tuition Waiver Program covers a wide range of undergraduate study options, including courses leading to a certificate, diploma or undergraduate degree, non-credit courses, apprenticeship programs and continuing education courses.

This program expansion is a part of the StrongerBC: Future Ready Action Plan, released May 2, 2023. It is a cross-government plan that will help make education and training more accessible, affordable, and relevant to help prepare the people of B.C. for the jobs of today and tomorrow. The Future Ready Action Plan is supported by a provincial investment of \$480 million over three years.

Quotes:

Tarah Dowling, former youth in care who holds a degree in visual art from Vancouver Island University, and plans to get a master's degree in art therapy –

“Being a child of the government since I was 10 years old, now 43, this opportunity for an education is not taken for granted. Growing up, I didn’t have a family to turn to for financial support. I now have a new sense of what that feels like and this blessing means more than you can ever imagine. I will be the first in my family to obtain a secondary degree and the one to break this generational cycle!”

Destiny Griffin, former youth in care who holds a diploma in criminal justice from Camosun College and working on a university degree –

“I was completely overjoyed with gratitude because, as a foster kid, a lot of the time you end up aging out of your support, and so I took a lot of comfort and security within my education. The fact that I could continue schooling really gave me some stability and it was something that I held onto. It takes a huge weight off your shoulders to know that there is support out there for tuition-free post-secondary education.”

Gauge Duce, former youth in care with a bachelor of education degree from the University of Victoria, and a diploma in inter-professional mental-health and addictions from Camosun College –

“I would not have been able to have any form of post-secondary education if it wasn’t for the tuition waiver program. My advice to former youth in care is to just try a program at college or university. You’re being handed an amazing opportunity that we are so blessed to be able to have. I’m so grateful to have had this opportunity.”

Cal Switzer, former youth in care and nursing student at Camosun College –

“The tuition waiver program has been a complete game changer. I can focus on becoming a good health-care worker. Without the funding support, I would probably not be able to do the nursing program or would have to look at something else.”

Lorena Bishop, executive director, Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks –

“As an organization that supports current and former youth in care, we’re excited about the expansion of the program, because this funding is changing lives and giving youth from care the opportunity to contribute their amazing skills and talents to the world. This expansion will help to bridge the gap between youth leaving government care and other young people who often rely on family support to pursue their education.”

Learn More:

To learn more about the Provincial Tuition Waiver Program, visit the StudentAidBC website:

<https://studentaidbc.ca/explore/grants-scholarships/provincial-tuition-waiver-program>

For information about the StrongerBC: Future Ready Action Plan, visit:

<https://strongerbc.gov.bc.ca/jobs-and-training>

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