

# Access to post-secondary education expanded for former youth in care

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Former youth in care in B.C. of all ages will have their tuition waived for post-secondary education as government takes action to remove age requirements for the Tuition Waiver Program.

In 2017, the B.C. government developed the Provincial Tuition Waiver Program that waived tuition and fees for former youth in care between 19 and 26. Effective Aug. 1, 2023, this expanded tuition waiver will be made available to all B.C. former youth in care at any age as part of StrongerBC's Future Ready plan to make education and training more accessible and affordable.

“Our government wants to ensure that all former youth in care can access post-secondary education and skills training, which will open up doors and opportunities and help them to thrive,” said Selina Robinson, Minister of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills. “Removing the age restriction for waived tuition will reduce barriers to post-secondary education, support people in pursuing good-paying and meaningful jobs, and support a more inclusive, balanced and diverse workforce.”

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.

“Even more young people who were in government care can now pursue their education goals and set themselves up for a bright future as a result of the expansion of this tuition waiver program,” said Mitzi Dean, Minister of Children and Family Development. “This builds on our government's new suite of supports for youth transitioning to adulthood from care.”

Individual grants for as much as \$3,500 per year will also be available to support Provincial Tuition Waiver Program recipients in covering additional educational expenses such as textbooks, internet costs and computers.

To be eligible for the Provincial Tuition Waiver Program, students must:

- be studying full or part time at an undergraduate level at a B.C. public post-secondary institution, the Native Education College or one of 10 approved union-based trades-training providers; and
- have been in any legal care status for a minimum of 24 months (cumulative), or turned 19 in any legal care status, or been adopted, or formerly in the Child in Home of a Relative program.

Introduced in 2017, the Provincial Tuition Waiver Program was previously limited to former youth in care between 19 and 26 at the time of their application. Since its implementation, 1,900 students have benefited from the program, with \$13 million in tuition and fees waived.

This extension of the program to former youth in care of all ages will be funded by \$19.2 million over three years. It is expected to support an additional 1,200 students who are enrolled in post-secondary programs and result in an estimated increase of 1,000 to 1,500 program participants per year.

This program extension supports the StrongerBC Future Ready plan to make post-secondary education and skills training more affordable and accessible, and to respond to the biggest challenge heard from businesses – the need for people. Budget 2023 lays out \$480 million over three years to support Future Ready’s work to break down barriers to post-secondary training so more people can get the training they need for in-demand careers and employers can access the talent they need.

**Quotes:**

**Tyrone McNeil, president, First Nations Education Steering Committee –**

“The Provincial Tuition Waiver Program is an important part of the supports for current and former First Nations children and youth in care to improve education outcomes and we are pleased to see its eligibility expanded. We look forward to working with the ministry to further increase eligibility and to ensure that all former youth in care receive full supports throughout their entire post-secondary education journey.”

**Mallory Woods, student, Vancouver Island University –**

“It took a village to get me this far, and it will continue to take a village to get others here beside me. The Provincial Tuition Waiver Program offers to those who have been in care the possibility to make strong strides towards the life they want to live, even if they, like me, once thought that life was unattainable. I truly can’t say what a gift that is. On a personal level it is life changing, both for me and for any lineage after me. On a community level, the tuition waiver program sounds to me like a love letter, from the university to potential students. It says, ‘You have been through something impossibly hard, but you are welcome here, no explanation needed.’ It is an example of unconditional love, institutionalized.”

**Braydon Chapelas, member, Youth Advisory Council –**

“This change to the tuition waiver program is extremely welcome and very appreciated, taking away previous pressures associated with finishing up all of my post-secondary education before I turn 27. It opens up the opportunity for me to further my education and gain additional credentials at my own pace while I continue to work full time and progress throughout my career.”

**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>

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## **Translations**

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