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Employment and Social Development Canada,
Canada Student Financial Assistance Program,
Email: EDSC.RCN.PCAFE_B2025ADC-CSFAP_B2025NOC.NCR.ESDC@hrsdc-rhdcc.gc.ca

April 29, 2026

Dear Canada Student Financial Assistance Program Officials,

On behalf of the National Association of Career Colleges (NACC), thank you for the opportunity to provide input on the proposed changes to eligibility for the Canada Student Grant for Full-Time Students, as announced in Budget 2025.

Career colleges across Canada recognize the Government's objective to strengthen the integrity and accountability of student financial assistance programs. We appreciate the efforts to ensure that public investments are aligned with student outcomes and labour market needs. Our members share these objectives. Canada's career colleges offer practical, efficient, and job focused training that allows graduates to meet Canada's labour market needs.

We also wish to acknowledge and thank the Government for identifying important areas for exemption, including dental hygiene, early childhood education, paramedic, and nursing programs. These fields represent critical components of Canada's healthcare and social infrastructure, and continued support for students in these programs is essential. We are proud of the role we play in supporting these crucial career training programs in Canada.

At the same time, we are concerned about the potential unintended consequences of limiting grant eligibility. Career colleges serve a distinct and essential role within Canada's post-secondary ecosystem, particularly in delivering short-cycle, employment-focused training that supports rapid labour market entry but also in delivering programs of longer length that supports crucial Canadian sectors.

Independent research indicates that career colleges are effectively serving working and diverse learners while delivering strong employment alignment. A majority (62%) of career college graduates were employed during their studies - 43% full-time and 19% part-time - demonstrating the flexibility of these programs to accommodate working adults.

Furthermore, 71% of surveyed career college graduates report that their current job is related to their field of study and an additional 10% reported that their job was at least



somewhat related to their field of study, highlighting the strong labour market relevance of career college programs.¹

These outcomes underscore the sector's importance in advancing key policy objectives, including:

- Expanding access to education for adult learners seeking to upskill or reskill;
- Improving participation and outcomes for underrepresented and non-traditional students; and
- Strengthening workforce pipelines in high-demand, skills-based occupations.

This same research indicated that costs and financial constraints were the top concern for graduates, with twice as many graduates reported experiencing significant financial hardship than those who did not.²

While many career college programs are shorter than 60 weeks, longer programs are necessary for careers requiring advanced competencies. In this context, NACC recommends that consideration be given immediately to targeted exemptions in the following areas of clear and demonstrated labour market need, each of which is aligned with the 2026 Spring Economic Update:

- Dental Assisting programs, which are essential to supporting access to oral health services across Canada;³
- Cybersecurity and Information Technology programs, which address critical and growing digital workforce shortages;⁴
- Skilled trades programs exceeding 60 weeks in duration, where training intensity and labour market demand align closely with public policy objectives (e.g., HVAC, Welding, Home Renovation, and the increasing needs within the Canadian Armed Forces);⁵
- Career Health training focused on Massage Therapy; and
- Other training programs that our provincial associations and members will raise in their submissions that will meet your own stated objectives.

We are particularly encouraged by the Government's indication that future exemptions may be considered, and we strongly express our interest in working collaboratively to help define and operationalize these exemptions.

¹ Nanos (2025). [NACC 20205 Career College Graduate Survey Results](#).

² *Ibid.*

³ Government of Canada (2026). [Spring Economic Update](#), at page 14 and 139.

⁴ Government of Canada (2026). [Spring Economic Update](#), at page 66 and 136-137.

⁵ Government of Canada (2026). [Spring Economic Update](#), at page 89.



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We encourage the Government to apply an outcomes-based exemption process rather than a narrow institutional or program-type exclusion.

In addition to the three proposed criteria,⁶ NACC recommends that future exemptions also consider:

- graduate employment outcomes;
- employer validation;
- work-integrated learning requirements;
- recognized third-party accreditation/certification; and
- and program alignment with occupations that support regional economic and social needs.

Providing early clarity on exemptions in these areas would help mitigate disruption for students and institutions, while ensuring continued alignment with workforce priorities.

NACC requests that Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) establish a working group consisting of industry partners, various levels of government, and regulated career colleges to ensure that the Canada Student Grant for Full-Time Students remains viable, while still remaining available to regulated career college students to meet labour market needs.

Dialogue and discussion with affected parties will be crucial in ensuring that the policy decisions reflect the economic needs of our country.

NACC remains fully committed to working constructively with ESDC and our sector to support the development of a policy approach that balances accountability with access and responsiveness to labour market needs.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Sangster". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Michael Sangster
CEO
National Association of Career Colleges

⁶ Demonstrated labour market demand, graduates qualified to work in provincially/territorially regulated, and that provinces/territories are not opposed to the exemption.