

Submission for the

***Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development
and the Status of Persons with Disabilities***

study concerning the

Canada Summer Jobs Wage Subsidy Program

Submitted by the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations

Interest:

The Canadian Alliance of Student Associations is a non-partisan, national voice for students. We represent undergraduate, graduate and polytechnic associations.

The Canada Summer Jobs (CSJ) program is a program used by many of our members. For many students, a Canada Summer Job is a first job. As such, for many, CSJ fills a niche in the skills and work-integrated learning environments by providing a first student integration into employment.

CASA has participated in the horizontal program review for youth and skills through the Treasury Board Secretariat, and is happy to reiterate its recommendations in a parliamentary forum.

Recommendations:

1. Maintain overall support for the program
2. Explore a new program focus on participants in their first summer of their first post-secondary credential.
3. Expand eligibility for participants to those above 30 who are participating in a post-secondary credential.
4. Undertake an assessment of the value provided by the small-business employer stream.
5. Increase funding to establish a pilot stream of funding for non-profits to offer part-time positions in the school year.
6. Increase collection of long-range outcome data
7. Consider rehousing the Computers for Schools Internship program under the Canada Summer Jobs

Evidence and Rationale:

1. Maintain overall support for the program

This program is a core element of Canada’s skills environment. More than other programs, it fills a core need for establishing true “entry-level” positions for youth, often positions that would not exist otherwise, especially among non-profits.

CASA was pleased to see the expansion of the program in 2016, aligned with former recommendations we had made to the government.¹ We would welcome further investment in the program, but have also highlighted a number of assessment recommendations allowing better operation while maintaining the program at current levels.

2. Explore a new program focused on participants in their first summer of their first post-secondary credential.

We believe that the early-career nature of the program is one of its strengths, and though we do not discount that, we believe the government should assess whether existing funds can be leveraged intentionally to fulfill this niche.

This area is empirically backed by a forthcoming survey conducted in partnership by CASA and Abacus Data, fielded in mid-July of this year. In it, we found 15% of all students were looking for but unable to secure summer employment. However, when studying the age 17-19 year-old subsample,

¹ Office of the Prime Minister (2016). Doubling the Canada Summer Jobs Program. <https://www.pm.gc.ca/en/news/backgrounders/2016/02/12/doubling-canada-summer-jobs-program>

consistent with most 1st year college and university students, that number increased to 28%. Lack of a summer job was not strongly influenced by field of study.²

These jobs are a source not only of transferable skills, useful for future employment, but also a source of income. This income is key to allowing domestic students to be able to afford education. The Canada Student Grant and provincial loan and grant programs expect students to make contributions to their education, and unless the student has savings, they draw on either summer work or part-time work.

The Canada Summer Jobs program helps students receive “entry-level” experience in the crucial first year, helping students work to afford education, while preparing them to be eligible for a wider pool of “non-entry-level” roles in following summers.

To further specialize in this niche, we recommend exploring whether program design can be adjusted to incentivize employers to hire first-year students. Subsidy rates may be one tool to use to this end. Another tool may be adding a points bonus to the application, identifying these students as “youth with unique barriers”. A final option may be exploring a separate stream of funding dedicated to “first-year only” positions, specifically for those receiving their first degree, diploma or certificate.

3. Expand eligibility for participants to those above 30 who are participating in a post-secondary credential

While the youth element is an important component of Canada Summer Jobs, we believe there is room for improvement in serving mature students

² Abacus Data & The Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (forthcoming). CASA Annual Student Survey – 2023.

as well. The Canada Summer Jobs program has a maximum employment age of 30. This is designed to focus the program on youth and those early in their careers. However, we believe that there is a subsection of those early in their careers that are missed by this arbitrary line.

An increasing trend in post-secondary education is the response to the decline of single-employer career trajectories. With individuals pivoting careers more often than in the past³, more post-secondary institutions are incorporating programs targeted at life-long learning, attracting mature students to study to prepare for new careers. As such, many individuals may return to a state where they want to seek employment in a new industry, but with little formal education or experience in that field. For this reason, we believe a loosening of eligibility to include individuals over 30 in a post-secondary credential should be eligible to compete for the general pool of Canada Summer Jobs.

This is also informed by conversations we have had with Indigenous students who shared the particular Indigenous context of Indigenous students who tend to pursue education later in life than non-Indigenous counterparts. Non-profit Indspire notes this as an important consideration in supporting Indigenous learners.^{4,5}

³ RBC (2018). Humans Wanted: The Coming Skills Revolution. Page 5.

<https://www.rbc.com/dms/enterprise/futurelaunch/assets-custom/pdf/RBC-Future-Skills-Report-FINAL-Singles.pdf>

⁴ Herkimer, J. (2021). Holding Our Ground: Indigenous Student Post-Secondary Persistence & Early Leaving. Indspire. Page 14.

<https://indspire.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Holding-Our-Ground-Report-EN-Final-WEB1.pdf>

⁵ Shankar, J., Ip, E. & Khamela, N.E (2017). *Addressing academic aspirations, challenges, and barriers of indigenous and immigrant students in a postsecondary education setting*. Journal of Ethnic & Cultural Diversity in Social Work 29(5). pp. 396-420.

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/15313204.2017.1409675>

We believe partial liberalization of this requirement will add to Canada’s overall skills and human development policy environment.

4. Undertake an assessment of the value provided by the small-business employer stream.

Currently, the Government of Canada maintains different funding levels for non-profits and for for-profit organizations when hiring CSJ participants, at 100% and 50% of minimum wage levels, respectively.⁶

One concern CASA has with regard to Canada Summer Jobs is that in the for-profit sector, some companies may be receiving subsidies for jobs they would have offered to youth anyway. We think this is of particular concern in the for-profit space, even among the limited small employer category that is eligible for CSJ. However, CASA also recognizes that these companies may fill critical community gaps, and in smaller communities may be one of very few options for local summer job delivery.

To this end, we believe a review should be conducted to assess if this eligibility leads to better or worse outcomes than the non-profit sector for participants. This may lead to the recognition of continued relevance, or of an area where funding may be efficiently reallocated.

⁶ Employment and Social Development Canada (2023). Canada Summer Jobs Applicant Guide. Page 14.
<https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/canada/employment-social-development/services/funding/canada-summer-jobs/csj-2023-applicant-guide.pdf>



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associations étudiantes

5. Increase funding to establish a pilot stream of funding for non-profits to offer part-time positions in the school year.

A longstanding recommendation of CASA addresses a gap in current programming is availability of part-time employment during the year. Our own data collected in partnership with Abacus data, shows that 24% of students want employment during the school year but are unable to find it.⁷

We therefore recommend that Canada Summer Jobs helps bridge this gap, specifically for post-secondary students by offering funding for the following roles that offer between 15-20 hours per week and are;

- Offering hours outside of a student's in-class hours;
- Offering experience relevant to areas of study; and,
- Otherwise meeting the criteria of the Canada Summer Jobs Program.

6. Provide for better collection of long-range outcome data

CASA supports general data collection across any government program when it can be used to improve future policy decisions. CASA recommends that if not already conducted confidentially, that the Canada Summer Jobs program conduct robust data collection.

As a program which targets youth, and which is predicated on supporting successful careers, the program would benefit from survey collection of outcome data from matriculants of the program, including the collection of retrospective identification by matriculants of how formative the program was in preparing them for their eventual career. Data should further identify economic outcomes of participants, in a format comparable to the Canadian

⁷ Abacus Data & The Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (forthcoming). CASA Annual Student Survey – 2023.

Income Survey. The purpose of this collection is to compare outcomes to the general Canadian population. A further use of this data would be iterative program improvement, identifying self-identified gaps by former participants to aid in program adjustments.

Further collection of data should include the current industry of work of the former participants, as well as the industry of their Canada Summer Job. Collection of industry data may likewise help with identification of sectors where more promotion may be needed, or where program design shuts out certain types of work, and thereby shuts out potential participants.

7. Consider rehousing the ISED Computers for Schools+ Internship Program under or adjacent to the Canada Summer Jobs program in ESDC

As a highly similar program in eligibility, and with similar desired outcomes, the CFS+ Internship is a good candidate for streamlining operations between government departments.

CASA believes an assessment of this program would additionally be useful, both to assess the dollars per participant compared to Canada Summer Jobs, and to compare participant outcomes.

We wish to make sure that the program is serving participant interests, and we believe placing the program under ESDC may result in better synergy in innovations between the two programs through the existence of the Youth and Skills Innovation Directorate.

Recommendations Summary:

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About the Alliance:

The Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA) is a non-partisan, not-for-profit student organization composed of 25 student associations from across Canada.

CASA, in partnership with the Quebec Student Union, represents over 365 000 students across our undergraduate, graduate and polytechnic member associations.

CASA advocates for an accessible, affordable, innovative and high-quality



post-secondary education system whose students enjoy an excellent quality of life.