

For immediate release

February 28, 2020

BCIT Student Association Welcomes Premier John Horgan and Minister Melanie Mark to the Annacis Island Campus to Announce B.C. Access Grants

Annacis Island, B.C. — Today, Premier John Horgan and Melanie Mark, Minister of Advanced Education, Skills, and Training, visited the Annacis Island Campus of BCIT and VCC to announce a new student financial assistance program, the *B.C. Access Grant*. This program, funded in Budget 2020, will provide up to \$4,000 per year for some 40,000 students across the province, complementing the existing supports provided by Student Aid BC and the Canada Student Loans Program.

“The BCIT Student Association has been a longstanding advocate calling on the Province to implement a comprehensive system of up-front needs-based grants,” said Steven Palfrey, Vice President External. “Today’s announcement is welcome news to the S.A., and to every student union and coalition in B.C. who have championed this policy over the past 15 years.”

“Affordability, whether it’s housing or tuition or transportation, is top-of-mind for students at BCIT, and this government has responded,” Mr. Palfrey continued. “Beginning this fall, tens of thousands of deserving students will benefit from the B.C. Access Grant, allowing them to focus on career planning and academic success.”

Premier Horgan and others emphasized the value that a post-secondary education can have on a young person’s life, whether that’s a diploma, certificate, or degree, to see themselves at a place like BCIT, gaining necessary skills for a promising career in this province.

“The new B.C. Access Grant will break down financial barriers and enable thousands more students to get a college or university education in their chosen fields,” said Premier Horgan. “It’s part of our government’s work to build a strong economy for everyone, where people can get good, well-paying jobs that support them and their families, and business can access more skilled workers.”

These new Access Grants are the latest in a string of advocacy victories for the student movement in B.C. Beginning in 2017, barriers have been reduced for Adult Basic Education and former Youth in Care. Interest rates on provincial student loans were slashed, and ultimately eliminated in 2019, while close to half a billion dollars has been made available for colleges and institutes to construct thousands of new units of on-campus student housing.

“Students have been calling for this moment for almost two decades,” said Melanie Mark, Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Training. “The new grant will open doors to post-secondary education for thousands of British Columbians who were shut out for far too long. This is a game changer that will benefit students who need it the most, especially with their up-front costs like tuition and books. I am so proud that our government is investing in the next generation of students.”

In the past year alone, the BCIT Student Association has proactively lobbied government to bring about this change. During that time, the Association has appreciated a chance to discuss this with both Minister Mark and B.C. Green leader Andrew Weaver as well as the B.C. Liberal and N.D.P. Members of the Legislature for all five of BCIT’s campuses: Janet Routledge (Burnaby North), Bowinn Ma (North Vancouver-Lonsdale), Sam Sullivan (Vancouver-False Creek), Teresa Wat (Richmond North Center), and Ravi Kahlon (Delta North).

For additional details on this new policy, please consult the Government of British Columbia’s news release, [here](#).

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