

EDUCATION FUNDING

engineerscanada



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Issue

Canada's engineering schools need to have adequate funding in order to respond to the demand for education by qualified students seeking engineering degrees.

Why Is This Important?

Constitutionally, the responsibility for education lies with the provincial and territorial governments. Nevertheless, the federal government makes significant financial contributions to higher education through federal transfer programs, including support for research and development.

Although enrolment in engineering schools in Canada has grown significantly in recent years, thousands of qualified students seeking engineering degrees are turned away each year by engineering schools due to inadequate funding and other resource constraints. At the same time, a growing number of professors at Canada's universities are reaching retirement age, which is putting pressure on the numbers of qualified faculty available to teach in engineering schools.

Engineering school enrolment reached a threshold of approximately 60,000 undergraduates in accredited programs in 2006, an increase of 13.5 percent from five years before, and 16.7 percent when including enrolment in not-yet accredited programs. Further increases are forecast as programs, started in the early part of this decade, are accredited. Enrolment growth has been strongest in Alberta, British Columbia and the Atlantic provinces.

In the early to mid-1990s, the federal government made large cuts to post-secondary education transfer payments to the provinces. Most provinces passed on the cost of those cuts to students in the form of

higher tuition fees. These fees, and the fear of accumulating a high debt load, have discouraged many Canadians from low-income households from considering careers in engineering. Consequently, otherwise qualified applicants may have been denied access to, or opted not to enter into engineering studies. Solutions must be found to ensure that all qualified students can have access to engineering schools regardless of their financial means.

What Has Engineers Canada Done To Date?

Engineers Canada has a direct interest in education funding through its Canadian Engineering Accreditation Board (CEAB), which accredits over 240 undergraduate engineering programs at over 40 institutions across Canada. The accreditation process ensures that graduates are academically qualified to be licensed as professional engineers and that institutions maintain high standards for their programs.

How Can Engineers Canada Contribute?

Working closely with the National Council of Deans of Engineering and Applied Sciences, Engineers Canada can provide the federal government with contacts and expertise in determining the best ways to address the resource and financing needs of Canada's engineering programs. Engineers Canada can also raise the issue of education funding and tuition in its ongoing dialogue with federal government officials and political leaders.

THE PROFESSION'S POSITION

Engineers Canada calls on the federal government to ensure adequate funding to permit equal opportunity for all qualified students in Canada to enter undergraduate engineering programs.

Engineers Canada calls for more federal government funding for university education in Canadian engineering programs as engineering capability is crucial to innovation in the country.

Engineers Canada calls for more federal government funding to enhance the quality of university engineering programs, especially in the areas of teaching, facilities, resources, and research.

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