



An access and enrolment crisis

In the 1990s enrolment in the college sector grew steadily and exceeded government targets. Under the Campbell Liberals, growth has come to a standstill, with institutions enrolling only about one-third of their government mandated targets. Adult Basic Education and other developmental programs have been particularly hard hit.

Here are some facts about access and enrolment in the colleges, university colleges and institutes.

- From 1991 to 2001 government targeted 21,500 new spaces and actual enrolment grew by about 22,000.
- From 2001 to 2003, government targeted about 4800 new spaces, but actual enrolment grew by just over 1300 spaces – a significant shortfall.
- Many urban institutions are struggling to meet demand and are running beyond capacity.
- At the same time, many institutions serving rural and remote communities have experienced declining enrolment.
- Adult Basic Education and other Developmental Education programs saw a drop of more than 1300 spaces – or ten per cent – in 2003-04.
- Real (inflation-adjusted) government funding per student is about 8% lower than in 2001.

Ask the candidates

- Does your party support increasing per student funding to at least 2001 levels, accounting for inflation and student enrolment targets.
- Will your party address declining enrolment – both in regions and in programs such as Adult Basic Education?
- Will your party commit to fast-tracking new facilities in high demand regions?
- Does your party support a freeze on tuition fees and a restoration of tuition-free Adult Basic Education?

Access solutions

Per student funding must be increased so that all institutions can meet enrolment targets and provide quality programs and services.

Post-secondary institutions need to work together in the public interest, not compete with one another. Government must play a role in bringing all the stakeholders, including faculty and students, to the table.

In areas where demand exceeds capacity, new facilities should be fast-tracked and additional funds provided for new programming.

In regions and program areas (Developmental Education) where enrolment is declining, institutions must be funded for student support programs and the ability to offer an adequate range of courses and services.

Tuition fees must be frozen and a comprehensive student grant program reinstated.