

November 20, 2015

Dear Colleagues and Students,

**Renewing our advocacy efforts with the federal government:**

Only two weeks into its new mandate, our newly elected federal government already faces several difficult challenges related to foreign policy, immigration and the economy, among many important issues. There are, however, some positive early signals that a new era may be dawning with regard to federal involvement and support for postsecondary education and research.

Counting among its pre- and post-election statements and commitments, the Liberal government's post-secondary policy initiatives include:

1. Providing direct help for students from low- and middle-income families to ensure that debt loads related to education are manageable.
2. Increasing the Canada Student Grant maximum for low-income students to \$3,000 per year for full-time students, and to \$1,800 per year for part-time students.
3. Increasing income thresholds for the Canada Student Grant eligibility, giving more students access to larger grants.
4. Maintaining the tuition tax credit.
5. Making the student loan system more flexible by ensuring that no graduate with student loans will be required to make any repayment until they are earning an income of at least \$25,000 per year.
6. Work with provinces and territories to ensure they do not assume any additional costs, and to make sure these investments go directly to students. Appropriate compensation will be offered to provinces and territories that do not participate in the Canada Student Loan program.
7. Investing \$50 million in additional annual support to the Post-Secondary Student Support Program, which supports Indigenous students attending post-secondary education, and will allow the program to grow in step with increasing demand.
8. Appointing a Chief Science Officer who will ensure that government science is fully available to the public, that scientists are able to speak freely about their work, and that scientific analyses are considered when the government makes decisions.
9. Restoring the long-form census.
10. Making it easier for international students and other temporary residents to become Canadian citizens by restoring the residency time credit, including changes to the Canadian Experience Class to reduce the barriers to immigration imposed on international students.

Working closely with Universities Canada, the U15 Group of Canadian Research Universities, and the Council of Ontario Universities, these items will form the initial basis of Western's renewed advocacy efforts with the federal government. The PSE sector has several strong links with the new federal cabinet, which includes two key members who are Western graduates: William (Bill) Morneau (BA'86, Political Science) as Finance Minister, and Jane Philpott (MD'84) as Health Minister. An accomplished business leader based in Toronto, Mr. Morneau's political experience includes service on the Government of Ontario's Pension Advisory Council and as Pension Advisor to Ontario's Minister of Finance. Dr. Philpott's resume includes service as a family physician, Chief of Family Medicine at Markham Stouffville Hospital, and teaching as an associate professor at the University of Toronto's Department of Family and Community Medicine. We have sent our congratulations to these two exceptional Western alumni and look forward to strengthening our relationships with them.

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Through his cabinet appointments, Prime Minister Trudeau has also signaled a renewed focus on science. Key appointments with ties to academia on this file include Navdeep Bains, a former chartered accountant with Ford Motor Company and a part-time professor at Ryerson's business school, who is the new Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, while medical geographer Kirsty Duncan, who has taught at Windsor, Toronto and Royal Roads, is the new Minister of Science. The PM himself has expressed a strong personal interest in youth and education by assuming responsibility for portfolios related to intergovernmental affairs and youth. During the press conference following the swearing in of his new cabinet, Mr. Trudeau spoke about the importance of access to post-secondary education, especially for Canada's Indigenous population.

These developments bode well for the possibility of new progress being made in the months and years ahead as the post-secondary sector begins to actively engage with our new government in Ottawa.

**Western named Top Canadian Employer:**

For the third year in a row, Western has been named one of Canada's Top 100 Employers — one of four universities to make the list, along with Simon Fraser, Toronto and New Brunswick. My thanks go out to each faculty and staff member who works every day to help Western pursue its teaching and research mission — this award is acknowledgment of your expertise and effort. Western continues to be one of our region's largest and most attractive employers and receives more than 32,000 job applications each year.

**Caring for others in times of distress:**

In the wake of the recent terrorist attacks in Paris, Beirut and other locations around the world, and as we enter a particularly stressful period on campus when students immerse themselves in preparation for examinations and papers due before the holiday break, it serves as a reminder that we all play a role in caring for others. I encourage you to be ever diligent in showing concern for friends and colleagues.

Western's Health and Wellness website offers several resources to help:  
[http://uwo.ca/health/mental\\_wellbeing/others/index.html](http://uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/others/index.html)

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Amit Chakma', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Amit Chakma  
President & Vice-Chancellor