



# FAIR SYSTEM FAIR FUTURE

BUILDING A BETTER FUTURE  
BY TREATING CONTRACT FACULTY FAIRLY

A submission to the Select Standing Committee  
on Finance and Government Services

**JULY 2019**



Federation of  
Post-Secondary Educators  
of BC



# INTRODUCTION

The Federation of Post-Secondary Educators of BC has 10,000 members working in every corner of the province to provide the education people, and our communities, need. With 80% of future jobs expected to require some level of post-secondary education, our network of colleges, institutions, and universities will only become more important.

Additional education gives everyone – not just the wealthy and well-connected – the opportunity to succeed and build a better future for themselves and our province. Clearly, a fair, sustainable post-secondary system is a crucial piece of this fair future.

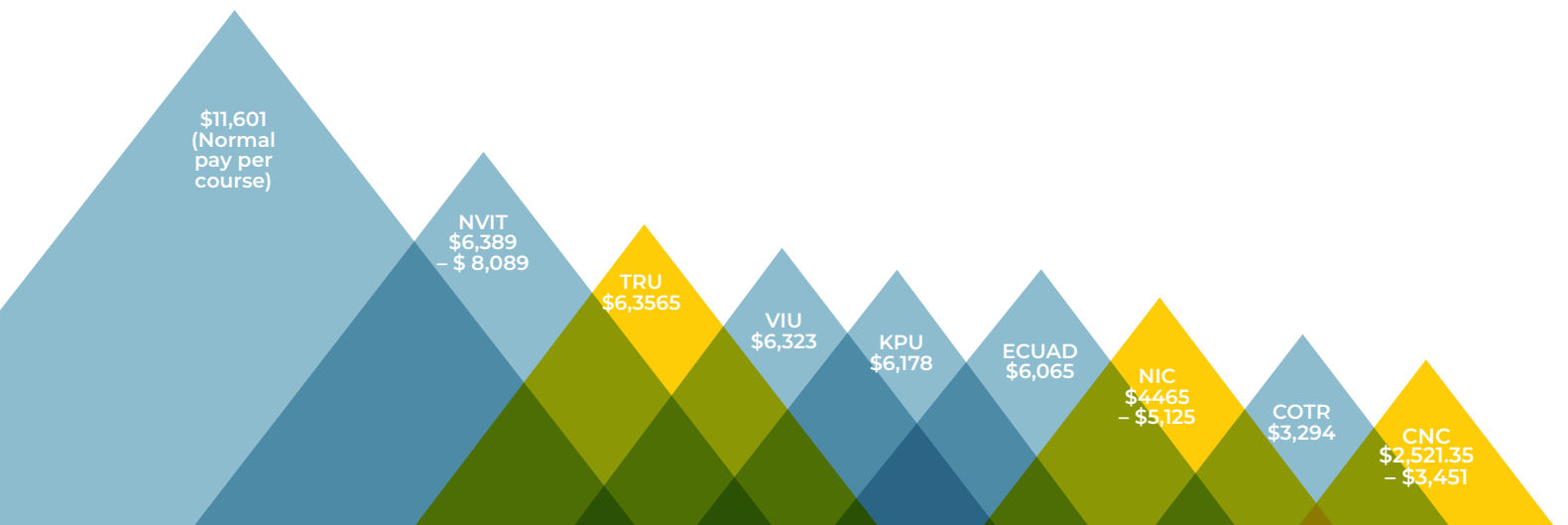
The way to ensure quality public services is not through austerity and short-term, underpaid, and precarious labour. Post-secondary education is no different. The provincial salary scale used across our system ensures that educators are paid fairly, without discrimination based on gender, race or ability. However, most contract faculty aren't paid on this system. Despite concerns raised about institutions abusing the use of these

contracts, the previous government ignored the problem, resulting in thousands of educators receiving half the pay for doing the same work. Our economy is increasingly reliant on our members to provide the education necessary for good, green jobs that pay fairly. We need to treat the people delivering that education with the same fairness that we all deserve. Contract faculty need to be paid on a pro rata basis (proportionate to the provincial salary scale).

## DEFINITIONS

**PROVINCIAL SALARY SCALE** – A pay scale that is the same across BC, with a clearly defined spectrum of pay (a scale) according to qualifications and experience.

**PRO RATA** – Proportionate. In our case, paying all faculty the rate they should receive on the provincial salary scale proportionate to the number of classes they are teaching. More simply, paying faculty doing the same job the same pay.



## WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

Over the decades, educators fought for changes to improve the post-secondary system – and won. Their work created the benefits of our current system: transferable credits, new courses, a process for student and faculty input on decisions, and a standard level of pay for educators through the provincial salary scale. But progress has stalled.

- 30% of educators represented by FPSE are contract faculty.
- Numbers and pay rates fluctuate widely across the province; some contract faculty are paid 80% less than their colleagues.
- The problem has become so large and entrenched that institutions are unable or unwilling to solve the problem. Action is needed from the government.

## ECONOMIC IMPACT

Contract work tends to be paid less than regular work and there is evidence that this can depress wages for regular work as well.<sup>1</sup> The combination of both of these factors in the post-secondary system – a significant portion of contract labour, and that labour being underpaid – paint a worrying picture for the higher education workforce. The post-secondary system relies on the expertise of educators developed over decades of study and experience. If left unchecked, an underpaid workforce undergoing continuous turnover will

undermine the ability of institutions and the system to provide the education people, and our economy, need.

Institutions appear to be prioritizing the ability to pay faculty less over pursuing long-term excellence as an education provider, and employer. As summarized in the CCPA's report Contract U, "reliance on contract faculty appears to be largely driven by choices made by university administrations, raising questions about the role of universities as employer and educator. Our findings lead us to the conclusion that the heavy reliance on contract faculty in Canadian universities is a structural issue, not a temporary approach to hiring.

The solutions to precarious faculty work in Canadian universities are multi-faceted. Universities need to take seriously their responsibility to their students, to their workers, and to the public that finances them. Governments have a role to play in ensuring adequate funding and in adopting stronger labour protections."<sup>2</sup>

Ultimately, the duration of a contract and the amount paid to workers are two separate issues. Regardless of the time commitment of a contract, the worker should receive the same pay for the same work. Given the obvious financial incentive for post-secondary institutions to choose to pay contract faculty as cheaper labour, government intervention and funding is needed to eliminate this practice at all institutions.

<sup>1</sup> The Size and Characteristics of Informal ("Gig") Work in Canada. Bank of Canada, 2019. <https://www.bankofcanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/san2019-6.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Contract U: Contract faculty appointments at Canadian universities. CCPA, 2018. <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/contract-u>

# HOW DID WE GET HERE?

A **provincial salary scale** was created, simplifying an equal pay scale across all institutions, ensuring that all educators would be paid according to this provincial standard and **eliminating pay discrimination due to gender, race, or physical ability.**



1996

1998



Unions achieved the historic improvement of **“regularization”**, where contract faculty re-hired year after year would be formally recognized as a long-term employee, paid according to their placement on the provincial salary scale, and able to advance in their career.

Improvements stall. Over several rounds of contract negotiations, educators have come to the table with solutions, but government ignored the problem. **Over time, contract faculty have fallen way behind** – some make 80% less than what should be paid on the provincial salary scale.



2001-2017

Now



It's time for progress and improvements to continue. **It's time to pay contract faculty fairly.**

## SOCIAL IMPACT

There are both economic and social consequences to the situation faced by contract faculty. While the economic impact imposes financial hardship, the social impact imparts a different kind of damage. Research conducted by the Canadian Association of University Teachers shows that women and people of colour are disproportionately represented in contract work.<sup>3</sup> Clearly, the way to recruit and retain educators of colour and of all abilities, including Indigenous educators, is not by cementing a cycle of underpaid contract work.<sup>4</sup>

## BUSINESS CASE

Eliminating secondary scales and placing contract academic staff on the provincial salary scale will have the following effects:

- Better and more frequent availability to students. This will improve the educational experience for students.
- Equity in the way regular and contract faculty are paid, creating a culture of fairness and respect.
- A level playing field among institutions, replacing a “race to the bottom” culture with respect and fairness.
- A stronger and more effective post-secondary education system for British Columbians.

PRECARIOUS FACULTY THEN	PRECARIOUS FACULTY NOW
Professionals teaching as a secondary job	Professionals want an academic career
59% are 55 or older	85% between 30-60 years old (in their prime earning years)
29% are concerned about precarity	89% are concerned about precarious nature of their work

<sup>3</sup> Out of the Shadows. CAUT 2018. [https://www.caut.ca/sites/default/files/cas\\_report.pdf](https://www.caut.ca/sites/default/files/cas_report.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Lack of diversity persists among teaching staff at Canadian universities, colleges, report finds. Toronto Star, 2018. <https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2018/04/06/lack-of-diversity-persists-among-teaching-staff-at-canadian-universities-colleges-report-finds.html>

## RECOMENDATIONS

Secondary scales should be eliminated, and all contract faculty should be paid on a pro rata basis (proportionate to the provincial salary scale).

## CONCLUSION

The need for a quality post-secondary system that pays people fairly is only becoming more important to workers, communities, and our economy. Underpaying contract faculty traps thousands of workers in short-term, underpaid, and precarious work, hampering their ability to participate in their community and the economy.

It is a tribute to the hard work and dedication of contract faculty that students receive the same quality of education from those who are paid less. However, paying some people less for doing the same work is not the way to build the post-secondary system we need.

**The way to build a sustainable province where people are treated fairly, life is affordable, and everyone has access to quality public services is through investing in them.**

Let's make sure that life is better for every person in our province.



**Federation of  
Post-Secondary Educators of BC**  
400 – 550 West 6th Avenue  
Vancouver, BC V5Z 1A1  
604.873.8988 | [info@fpse.ca](mailto:info@fpse.ca) | [fpse.ca](http://fpse.ca)