



2026 AVICC Resolution

Student Food Security Grant

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS since 2020 an approximately 20 percent inflation rate has contributed to a cost-of-living crisis that has particularly impacted students, and post-secondary food banks are seeing dramatically increased use, including a ten fold increase in visits to the University of Victoria Students' Society (UVSS) food bank from Spring 2020 to Spring 2024;

AND WHEREAS local businesses and the broader community regularly support campus food banks with donations, but student societies require stable funding for student part-time staff positions in order to operate and expand food bank programs to meet the increased needs on their campuses;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT AVICC and UBCM advocate to the Honourable Minister Sheila Malcolmson, Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction, to provide funding support to BC post-secondary student unions, by establishing a food security grant, equivalent to \$1.50 per student, to address student food insecurity as evidenced by the increased use of post secondary campus food banks.

BACKGROUND

The impacts of inflation have created significant cost-of-living pressures across British Columbia. These pressures have deeply affected post-secondary students, who often face high tuition fees, housing shortages, and limited income opportunities. One visible result of this crisis has been a dramatic increase in demand for campus food banks.

Local businesses and community members have generously supported student food banks with monetary and in-kind donations. However, student societies require sustainable funding to employ part-time student staff and to maintain and expand food bank operations. These positions are essential for coordinating donations, managing inventory, and delivering outreach and support programs efficiently and consistently.

Establishing a Food Security Grant of \$1.50 per enrolled student would provide ongoing financial stability for these programs. This initiative would align with the Province's broader Poverty Reduction Strategy, support equity in post-secondary

education, and strengthen local food security systems connected to campuses and communities.

Increasing Usage of Food Banks

With the rising cost of living, food bank usage has increased across BC, with students being one of the most affected demographics. According to Food Banks BC,¹ since 2019, the number of individuals accessing food banks in British Columbia has risen by 32%, with the number of visits by households increasing by 81% from 2019 to 2024.

Student union food banks have been disproportionately impacted by this rise in food insecurity, as students with less access to financial resources increasingly turn to these food banks for support. For example, BC's largest student union food bank, the AMS Food Bank, has seen a 1,800% increase in usage between 2019 and 2025, clearly showing that students are one of the groups most impacted by rising food insecurity. At the UVSS, food bank usage increased by 1,090.5% from spring 2020 to spring 2024.²

Additionally, many universities and colleges in BC have little to no support for students facing food insecurity. SFU, the provinces' second largest postsecondary institution, and a research university with thousands of graduate students, has no food bank. Instead, students must rely on a food pantry overseen by the Student Society that is almost completely sustained through grants acquired externally with no stable reserve fund, as well as a program where students can apply for \$50 worth of food certificates to Nesters Market and T&T Supermarket once per semester.

Many other smaller universities and colleges have community pantries or cupboards, but no consistent, reliable food bank service. Students who attend colleges without existing food bank infrastructure in smaller communities, such as North Island College or Northern Lights College, are especially at risk, as their communities at-large may lack consistent food bank services. For instance, Port Hardy³ and Fort Nelson's⁴ food banks only give out food every two weeks, Campbell River's only once a month,⁵ and the main food bank in Dawson Creek⁶ is scrambling to keep up with increasing demand, seeing 800 visits in September 2025, double its average.

¹ Food Banks BC. (2025). "Food Banks BC: Hunger Report 2024." Available at https://www.foodbanksbc.com/files/ugd/535e9e_b59a33aaf9964993a5ef9433b12fc030.pdf

² UVSS. (2025). "Food bank statistics." Available at <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1awhljKHruVr-ggG5NPvVmdeNm88zGV6v5nQmCnOWXjY/edit?usp=sharing>

³ Loaves and Fishes, Community Food Bank. (n.d.). "Port Hardy Free Food Market." Available at <https://www.vifoodbank.org/port-hardy-individuals>

⁴ Fort Nelson Food Bank. (n.d.). Available at <https://www.facebook.com/p/Fort-Nelson-Food-Bank-100083455536150/>

⁵ Campbell River Food Bank. (n.d.). Available at <https://crfoodbank.ca/>

⁶ Abel, N. (2025 September). "Dawson Creek food bank struggles to keep up as visits almost double." *CJDC TV*. Available at <https://www.cjdctv.com/news/article/dawson-creek-food-bank-struggles-to-keep-up-as-visits-almost-double/>

Student Food Security Grant Program

With increasing food bank demand, student unions, which operate as non-profit organizations with tight budgets, are put under financial pressure to hire and pay enough workers (on top of volunteers) to maintain smooth operations, in addition to bearing the costs of transportation and equipment. According to data from the AMS, as well as the UVSS, a student union spends on average \$1.50 on labour costs for their food bank per every student at their institution.

Thus, for example, if a college had 10,000 students, their student union can expect to pay about \$15,000 annually in labour costs to operate a food bank that adequately meets student needs. Student union food banks typically hire a few part-time students who work 10-20 hours a week for around \$20 an hour.

The significant increase in food bank usage has put student unions in a difficult financial state, as student unions largely operate on student fees and have a low budgetary ceiling, while having to keep up with food bank demand. This is why this draft AVICC/UBCM resolution asks that the government help student unions combat food insecurity by creating the Student Food Security Grant, committing an annual grant worth \$1.50 per student enrolled in a public BC post-secondary institution to the student union representing from that institution.

According to calculations by student advocacy organization, using provincial enrollment numbers, such a program would likely cost just under \$650,000.⁷ In the case of post-secondary institutions where the student union does not have the capacity to organize a food bank, this money could be transferred to the student union to their institution. For example, at UFV, the university administration manages the operation of the on-campus foodbank. This funding would be used to fund student jobs, creating good, on-campus work where students have the opportunity to help their peers.

This money would be proportionately allocated to each student union based on their enrolment. For established food banks, like those at UBC and UVic, this funding would help ease financial strain caused by increased use. For smaller food banks and student unions without food banks, the funds could help hire a student or two who could build/ expand their food bank service, which is especially important for colleges in non-urban environments where alternative food banks could be difficult to access or low capacity.

⁷ See UVSS. (2025). "Student issues backgrounder 2025." Available at <https://uvss.ca/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/Provincial-Lobby-Briefs.pdf>

Summary

Establishing a Food Security Grant Program can provide essential financial support to post secondary students, ensuring their well-being and contributing to a healthier and more productive future workforce, while creating good, high-impact job opportunities for students. By proactively addressing this issue, the province can play a vital role in ensuring that no university student must make the choice between paying for tuition or food.