



September 29, 2026

Ref: 232121

Vanessa Craig, President
Association of Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities (AVICC)
and Electoral Area Director, Regional District of Nanaimo Board, Area B
Via email: info@avicc.ca

Dear Vanessa Craig:

Thank you for your letter dated July 30, 2026, regarding the resolutions endorsed by the Association of Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities (AVICC) on food security and affordability for post-secondary students.

We appreciate your advocacy on this issue and agree on the importance of food security and affordability for post-secondary students in our Province. People are facing big challenges with food prices, particularly as global inflation and oil shocks drive up costs at the grocery store, and we hear how people are struggling with the high costs of food and relying on food banks and other services to fill the gaps.

We want people to have the supports they need, including having access to nutritious, healthy food where they are. That's why the ministry has made unprecedented investments in food security—including significant investments in community food programs to help people access fresh, local food—and continues to work with partners to help support those most in need.

Since 2019, the ministry has invested over \$70 million in organizations supporting food security initiatives in communities across British Columbia. This funding is being distributed over several years, with investments continuing through to 2028 to ensure sustained support and long-term impact for people and communities.

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Our investments in food security partners are:

- Helping people get more fresh, nutritious food;
- Strengthening the infrastructure of community food programs;
- Helping local groups meet the increasing demand for healthy, nutritious food in their communities; and
- Creating more community food hubs for people.

We are taking action to address both the rising cost of living and support community organizations to help people put healthy food on the table. For example, our partnership with Loaves & Fishes to build their new regional food-recovery warehouse is helping strengthen food security. It will allow Loaves and Fishes to collect, sort and distribute far more fresh food to communities across the Island, reducing waste and supporting families, increasing the capacity to recover food as well.

Another encouraging example is Vancouver Island University partnering with Loaves & Fishes Community Food Bank to improve food security, making it easier for students and community members to access nutritious food where they need it.

These initiatives help with people's immediate needs, while also tackling longer-term food security and reducing the need for people to rely on food banks.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Food (AF) is also working to help ensure BC has a strong and reliable food supply, now and into the future. To build a resilient food network, AF is:

- Supporting BC farmers and food businesses so they can continue producing food for families across the Province;
- Helping farmers deal with challenges such as extreme weather, rising costs, and supply chain disruptions so they can continue putting food on peoples' tables;
- Investing in programs such as Feed BC that help communities, schools, post-secondary institutions, hospitals, and care facilities access more food grown and produced in BC;
- Working with retailers to improve access and get more BC food on grocery store shelves;
- Supporting Indigenous communities in strengthening local food production and food security; and
- Working across government to build a stronger food system that is more resilient, sustainable, and able to provide food close to home.

For students, it is government's goal to ensure that BC has an accessible, high quality post-secondary education system that is affordable and sustainable over the long term.

The Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills' [StudentAid BC](#) program operates in partnership with the Government of Canada and provides a range of financial assistance programs, including grants, bursaries, tuition waivers, student loans, loan forgiveness, and repayment assistance programs.

In addition, in recent years, the Province has made several changes to improve the accessibility and affordability of student financial assistance. In 2023, the Government of BC doubled weekly student loan limits, increasing available funding from \$110 to \$220 per week for single students and from \$140 to \$280 per week for students with dependants. Eligibility rules have also been updated to allow students to work while studying and remain eligible for student financial assistance. These changes provide students with greater flexibility to help meet their education and living costs.

StudentAid BC maintains programs that support post-secondary affordability, poverty reduction, and student success for eligible students and former students who are in repayment through funding opportunities for [full-time students](#) and [part-time students](#), as well as through [grants and scholarships](#).

StudentAid BC continually reviews its programs and policies to improve access to post-secondary education while balancing the need to provide sustainable support for current and future students.

Finally, it is important to note that as we are in an election period during which the BC government will be in caretaker mode, issues regarding future funding for programs and other policy decisions must be deferred until after the election is complete and the incoming government is in place. That said, I would like to assure you that all topics brought up will be shared with the incoming Minister.

Thank you for AVICC's advocacy on behalf of post-secondary students in BC. I appreciate the time you have taken to bring your concerns to our attention.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R Fieltsch', on a light gray rectangular background.

Raymond Fieltsch
Acting Deputy Minister

cc: Marianne Alto, Mayor, City of Victoria
Kevin Murdoch, Mayor, District of Oak Bay
Jocelyn Jenkyns, Chief Executive Officer, City of Victoria
Michelle Hunt, Chief Administrative Officer, District of Oak Bay