

Public Opinion on Post-Secondary Education in Nova Scotia



Association of Nova Scotia
University Teachers

Canadian Federation of
Students - Nova Scotia

Nova Scotia Government &
General Employees Union

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For more information on this brief contact:
Canadian Federation of Students - Nova Scotia
111-1657 Barrington St.
Halifax, NS
B3J 2A1

(902) 425-4237 (t)
(902) 425-4256 (f)

Nova Scotia Post-Secondary Education Coalition

The Post-Secondary Education Coalition is comprised of the Association of Nova Scotia University Teachers (ANSUT), the Canadian Federation of Students-Nova Scotia (CFS-NS) and the Nova Scotia Government and General Employees Union (NSGEU). Our coalition brings together faculty, students and staff concerned with the current state of post-secondary education in Nova Scotia.

The coalition began in February 2005, when we jointly commissioned our first poll of 800 Nova Scotians for their views on post-secondary education accessibility and student debt. The key findings included significant support for lower tuition fees, recognition that student debt-loads were out of hand, and a belief that government funding for post-secondary education should be increased.

Our coalition meets regularly with government officials at the provincial

and federal level to discuss pressing issues in post-secondary education, as well as present policy alternatives for a high quality and affordable post-secondary education system in Nova Scotia.

In 2007, we commissioned our second poll. Once again, this poll showed significant support for increased funding for post-secondary education, tuition fee reductions, and needs-based grants for students.

This document includes results from a jointly commissioned poll of 800 Nova Scotians conducted by Opinion Search Research from December 9th to 16th, 2010.

The Coalition continues to meet on regular basis to discuss pressing issues affecting our collective membership and to strategise about how to ensure that post-secondary education is a provincial priority.





Polling Results at a Glance

- More Nova Scotians are concerned about the affordability of post-secondary education than taxation, unemployment, and crime.
- 88% of Nova Scotians think post-secondary education should be a high priority.
- 83% of Nova Scotians think tuition fees should be reduced.
- Over 2/3 of Nova Scotians think tuition fees are too high.
- 32% of Nova Scotians surveyed said that in the past year, they or someone in their family did not attend college or university because it would mean taking on too much debt.

- 53% of respondents are very concerned and 30% are somewhat concerned that students will have to leave the province for higher wages because of large debt loads.
- 59% would pay higher taxes to make PSE more affordable.
- 66% of Nova Scotians think that government funding should make up a higher portion of university funding, and 26% think it should stay the same.
- 91% of Nova Scotians think that support services are important and 65% think there need to be more services.
- 810 Nova Scotians surveyed between over 3 days in December.
- Margin of error: +/- 3%, 19 times out of 20.

Government Priorities

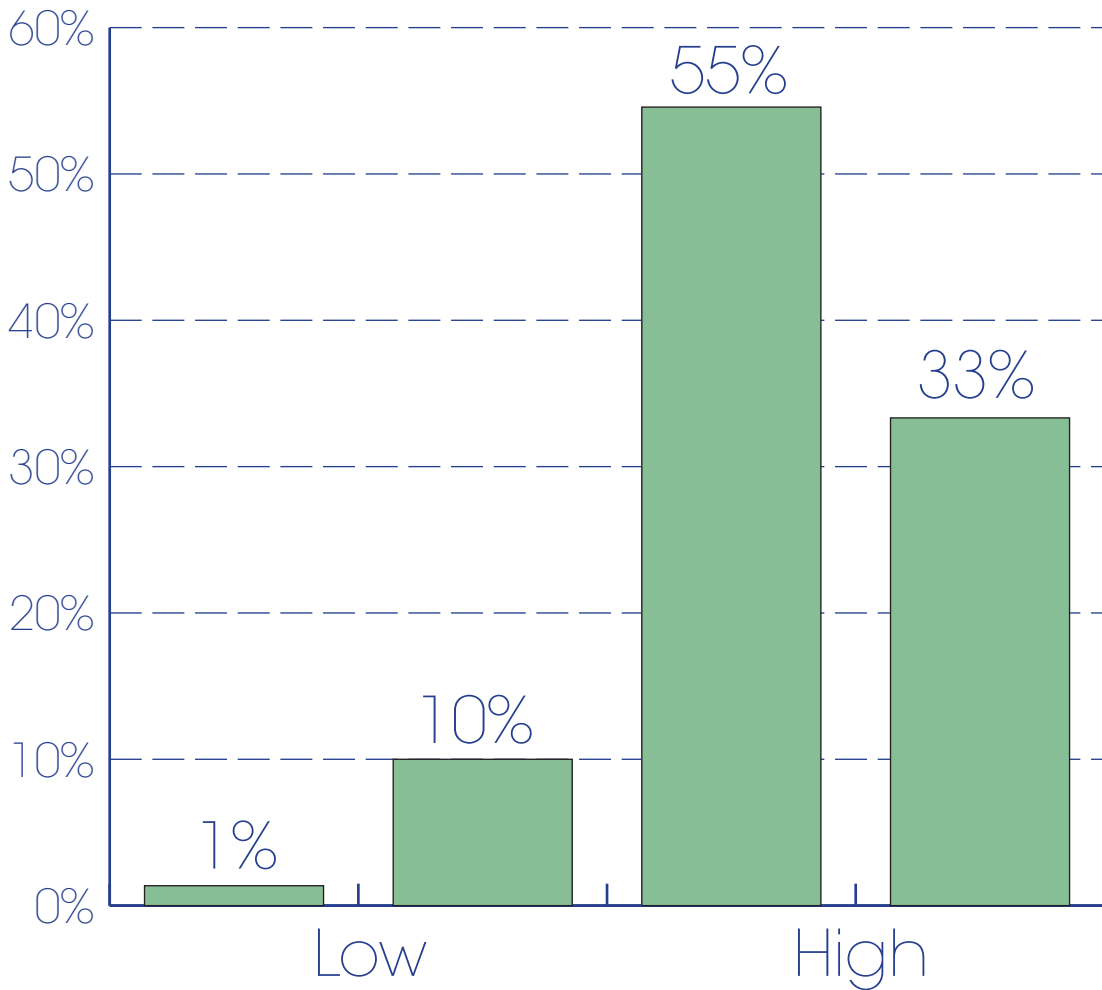
More Nova Scotians are concerned about the affordability of post-secondary education than taxation, unemployment, and crime.

On a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 is “not at all concerned” and 10 is “very concerned,” how concerned are you with each of the following issues:

(% of Nova Scotians surveyed who answered 8 or higher)

The quality of health care in Nova Scotia:	66%
The affordability of post-secondary education:	65.3%
The level of taxation in Nova Scotia:	64.5%
Unemployment and the job market:	59.5%
The quality of primary and secondary education:	58.5%
The level of crime in your community:	51.5%

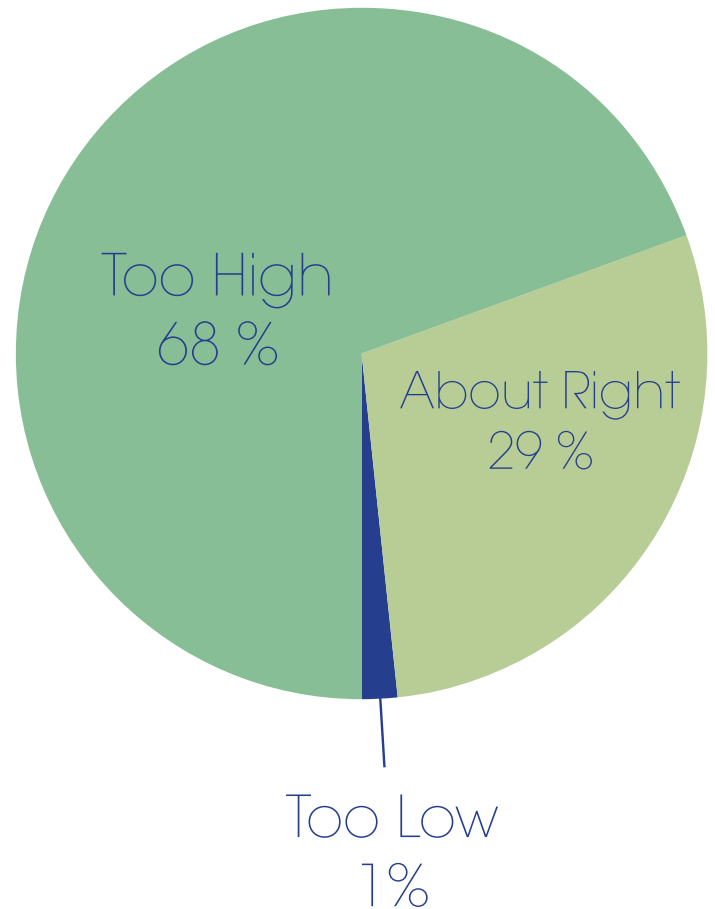
How high a priority should post-secondary education be for the government of Nova Scotia?



88% of Nova Scotians think post-secondary education should be a high priority.

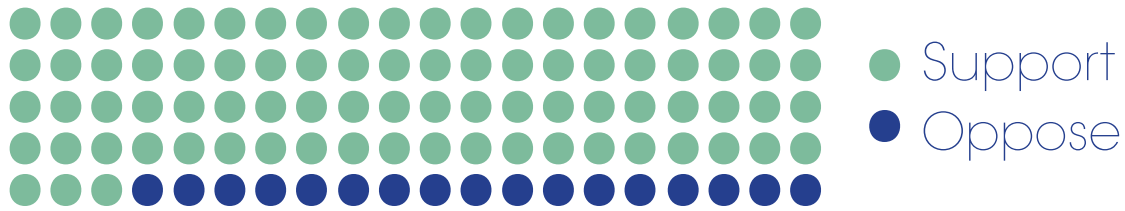
Tuition Fees

Undergraduate students in Nova Scotia pay an average of \$5 400 per year in tuition fees. In your opinion is the level of fees too high, too low, or about right?



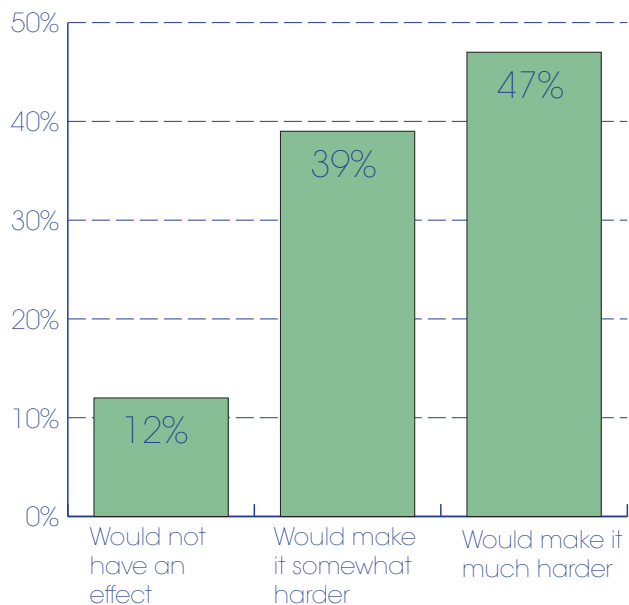
Over 2/3 of Nova Scotians think tuition fees are too high.

Do you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose reducing tuition fees for students in Nova Scotia?†



83% of Nova Scotians support reducing tuition fees

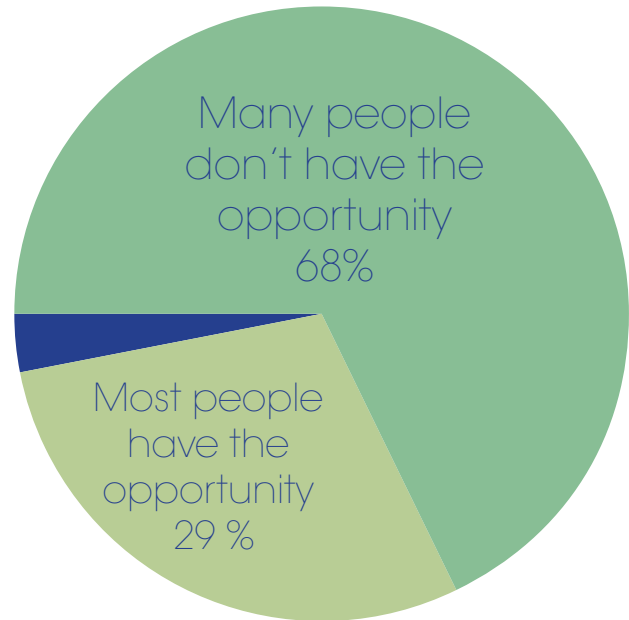
Recently, a government-commissioned report recommended that university tuition fees for students who come to study in Nova Scotia from another province increase to over thirteen thousand dollars per year over five years. What effect do you think this would have on the ability of Nova Scotia universities to attract students from other provinces?



† This question was asked during a follow-up survey during the first week of January. The margin of error for this question is +/- 3.9%, 19 times out of 20.

Access to PSE

Do you believe that currently, in Nova Scotia, most people who are qualified to go to university and college have the opportunity to do so, or do you think there are many people who are qualified to go but don't have the opportunity to do so?

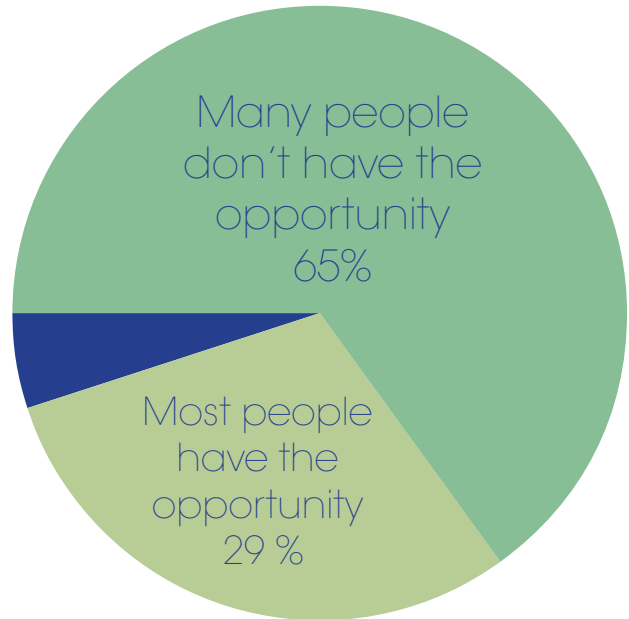


Which of the following four issues best reflects the reason you are concerned:

University and College Education is too Expensive For Many People	83%
There are Not Enough Programs Available	2%
There are Not Enough University and College Spaces for Everoyne Who is Qualified	1%
Family Responsibilities Make It Difficult to get a Post-Secondary Education	11%

Access to PSE for re-training

In the current economic recession, many Nova Scotians are looking to get retraining to re-enter the workforce or to upgrade their skills. Do you believe most people who are interested in retraining or upgrading and are qualified to go to university or college have the opportunity to do so, or do you think there are many people who don't have the opportunity to do so?



Which of the following four issues best reflects the reason you are concerned:

University and College Education is too Expensive For Many People	64%
There are Not Enough Programs Available	3%
There are Not Enough University and College Spaces for Everoyne Who is Qualified	4%
Family Responsibilities Make It Difficult to get a Post-Secondary Education	27%



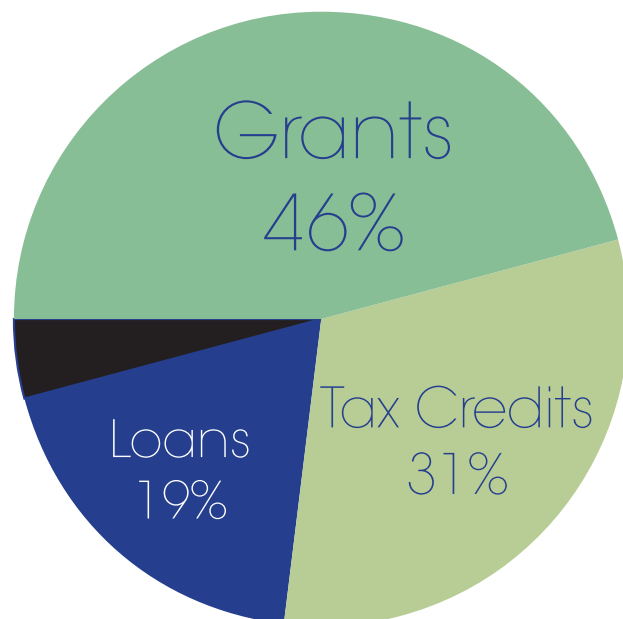
Student Debt

32% of Nova Scotians surveyed said that in the past year, they or someone in their family did not attend college or university because it would mean taking on too much debt.

Most Nova Scotians believe non-repayable student financial assistance is a better way to help students than loans.

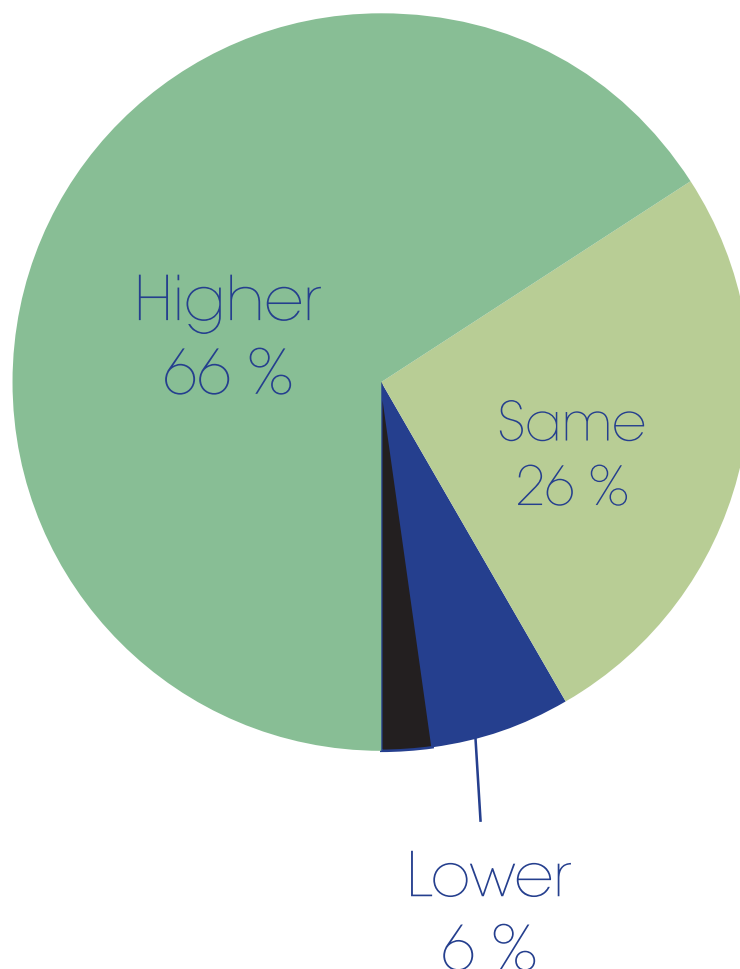
53% of respondents are very concerned and 30% are somewhat concerned that students will have to leave the province for higher wages because of large debt loads.

The provincial government helps students and their families pay for college or university in a number of ways, including loans, grants, and tax credits for graduates who stay in the province. What do you think is the best way for them to do so?

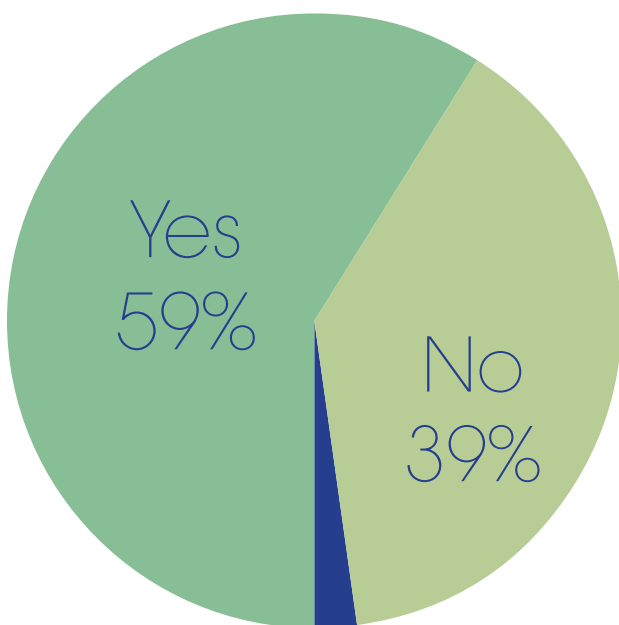


Funding

University revenue comes from several sources including government grants, tuition fees from students, and donations from private individuals and corporations. In 1978, government funding made up 80 per cent of university budgets in Nova Scotia. In 2008, government funding accounted for 46 per cent. Do you think that government funding should make up a higher proportion of university funding, a lower proportion, or should it stay the same.



The majority of Nova Scotians would pay higher taxes to improve the affordability of colleges and universities.

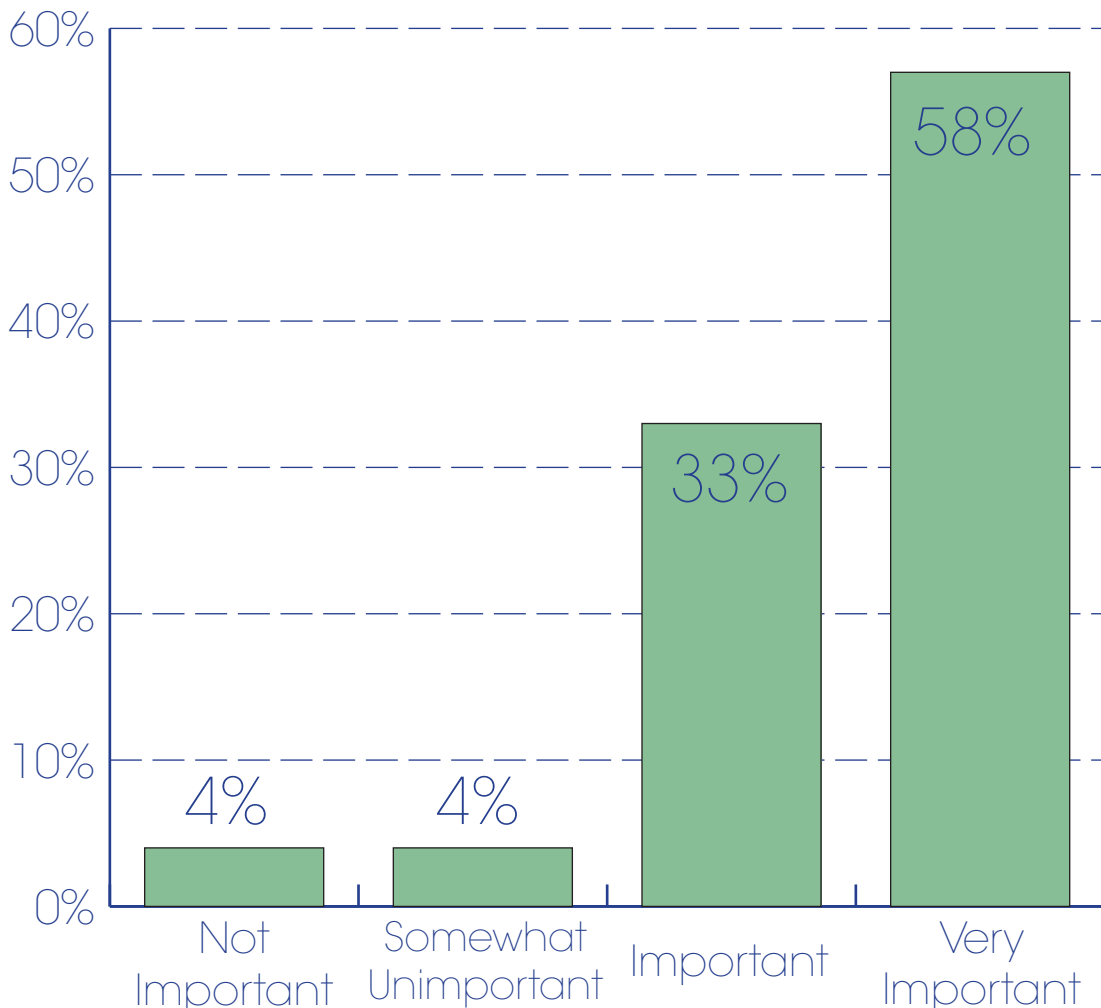


Would you be willing to pay a small increase in your income taxes if you knew that it would go to improving the affordability of the university or college in your area?

70% of respondents with incomes below \$30,000 would pay higher taxes to make PSE more affordable.

Student Services

How important do you think that support services, including academic advising, services for students with disabilities, library services, and other student supports, are in post-secondary education?



Do you think there should be more or less of these services, or should they stay the same?

65% - More Services

19% - Stay the Same

7% - Less Services

How is the government doing?

On a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means a poor job and 5 means an excellent job, how well do you think the provincial government is handling the issue of making college and university affordable?

