



Tuition fees

for Refugee students at Canadian colleges and universities

In 2003 Canadian law changed to allow recognised refugee students – all protected persons – to be eligible for federal student loans and for most provincial student loan programs. That means that refugee students may now have the means to go to college, university or technical school. However, the tuition fees charged to protected persons in some institutions may remain a barrier to post-secondary education.

This guide lays out:

- √ the current status of tuition fees charged to protected persons across Canada

The Getting Landed Project

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As of 2003, recognized refugee students are eligible for federal student loans and most provincial student loan programs. That opens the door to university, college and technical school for more of these students.

However, refugee students need special documents and application forms in order to access these student loans. As well, as with any new system or change in procedure, there are bugs and delays. The regulations and processes around student loans are still catching up to the change in law. Brochures are available for each province, entitled *Applying for Canadian student loans for college and university: a guide for refugee students*. These brochures lay out the procedures and timelines for students to follow. They are available on our website (www.cpj.ca/studentloans).

All students, including refugees, can receive student loans from the province where they live to attend a school in their own or another province. However, the tuition fees charged to protected persons by some Canadian institutions may remain a barrier to post-secondary education. Frequently protected persons are charged international student fees which are higher, in many cases double, those of Canadian-born (domestic) students.

This practice hurts students who are protected persons. It is also inconsistent, as all those eligible to apply for student loans in Canada should be eligible for the same domestic rate of fees. This inconsistency means that protected persons (including refugee students) will need an even higher amount of loans, and then have a higher burden of debt to repay. The prospect of such a high amount of loans and then debt will likely serve to keep refugee students out of university, college and technical schools. It is a barrier to post-secondary education for those who need the education to get on with a new life in Canada. Citizens for Public Justice hopes that the policy change on student loans will lead to a matching policy change on tuition fees. Indeed, CPJ and its many partners who fought to

create access to student loans for protected persons, call on all post-secondary institutions to review their fee policy and charge only domestic rate fees to protected persons.

In the meantime, here is the current information, listed by province and territory, about the current status of tuition policies across Canada.



Who are recognized refugee students or protected persons?

Every year Canada welcomes tens of thousands of refugees to this country. Refugees are those who have had to leave their home country because of civil strife, fear of persecution or like causes. Under the Geneva Convention they are entitled to safety and to creating a new life in Canada. They undergo a process of first being recognized as valid refugees or protected persons, and then of becoming permanent residents (and later citizens if they so choose). This can go quickly but usually the process takes a few years and, sometimes, much longer. Over the years Canada has come to see recognized refugees undergoing the permanent resident process as “Canadians-in-waiting.” Canada extends opportunities like access to student loans to them to help them get on with their lives and integrate into our society.

Recognised refugees fall under the category of protected persons and are therefore eligible for federal student loans and most provincial student loan programs. Refugee claimants and asylum seekers (those who have yet to be determined as refugees in Canada) are not eligible for student loans.



Tuition fees

Most Canadian colleges, universities and technical schools are accustomed to having protected persons apply to attend. However, different schools and provinces have different policies regarding the tuition which refugees will be asked to pay. Some require them to pay domestic fees (the fees that Canadian-born students pay) and some charge the higher international fees. The policy on what fee is charged can be set by either the school itself, or sometimes by the provincial government. For instance, in Nova Scotia and Saskatchewan, each school has its own guidelines for tuition. In Alberta, on the other hand, the province has a set fee structure for universities to follow. The Ontario government has established that recognised refugees do not have to pay international tuition fees.

Sometimes this information is hard to find. The specific policies guiding tuition fees charged to protected persons may only be found in the international student portion of a school calendar or web site. This may be the case even if, as in Ontario, protected persons are exempt from international student fees.

No matter what the school's calendar says, it is always worth asking the school to consider the applicant as a domestic student for the purposes of paying tuition.



General information by province as of January 2004

This guide will be updated as we receive new information.

British Columbia:

Each institution sets its own tuition fees. Please consult the school directly.

Alberta:

Tuition fees are set by each institution, but are governed by the 'tuition fee policy' of the Government of Alberta. According to this policy, additional fees are required of international students, who are usually deemed anyone who is not a Canadian citizen or permanent resident. However, conversation with officials indicates that the government may make an exception in the case of protected persons, and classify them as 'permanent residents' for the purposes of paying domestic tuition. Including a letter requesting this treatment is a good idea when applying for student loans.

Saskatchewan:

Each institution sets its own tuition fees. Please consult the school directly.

Manitoba:

Each institution sets its own tuition fees. Please consult the school directly.

Ontario:

The Ontario government has stated that recognises refugees are an exception to the international student tuition rule, and should be charged only domestic tuition. The school may not indicate this clearly on their website or calendar, but it applies to all public universities, colleges and technical institutes in Ontario.

Quebec

Tuition for public institutions is set by the provincial government. The term “differential fees” is used for the fees charged for both Canadian students from outside Quebec, and international students. By government policy, protected persons are an established exception to the international student differential fee. (Please also note that Quebec’s student loan program is separate from the Canada Student Loan program and is not available to protected persons.)

New Brunswick:

Each institution sets its own tuition fees. Please consult the school directly.

Prince Edward Island:

Institutions set their tuition fees in conjunction with the government. Please consult the school directly.

Nova Scotia:

Each institution sets its own tuition fees. Please consult the school directly.

Newfoundland & Labrador:

Information not currently available.

Yukon, the Northwest Territories, Nunuvut

Information not currently available.

For more information:

Copies

Copies of this brochure can be found online at www.cpj.ca/studentloans. They are in PDF format and can be downloaded and printed. Provincial guides entitled *Applying for Canadian student loans for college and university: a guide for refugee students* can also be found there.

Help

If you have trouble understanding what is required, making applications, or if your students have trouble getting access to student loans, you are welcome to contact The Getting Landed Project. Email studentloans@cpj.ca and we will get back to you.

Who are we?

The Getting Landed Project was created to eliminate barriers that keep refugees in Canada in a state of limbo, unable to get on with their lives. Creating access to student loans removes one of those barriers. The project is managed by Citizens for Public Justice (www.cpj.ca) and the Public Justice Resource Centre (www.publicjustice.ca).