



## Budget 2017: Skills Boost Backgrounder

The Federal Budget 2017 introduced measures to provide **enhanced student financial assistance** and **make better use of Employment Insurance flexibilities** targeted to working or unemployed Canadians looking to return to school to upgrade their skills. Together these initiatives comprise **Skills Boost**.

### Enhanced Student Financial Assistance Measures

Budget 2017 proposed to enhance supports available to working Canadians by investing \$454.4 million over four years to:

- **Introduce a three-year pilot project for adult learners** that will, starting in the 2018–19 academic year:
  - provide **top-up funding of an additional \$1,600 per year** in grant support to students who have been out of high school for at least 10 years and are returning to full-time post-secondary studies; and
  - give **flexibility to assess grant eligibility based on the current year's income** (rather than for the previous year) in recognition of a significant change in financial circumstances.
- **Expand eligibility for part-time grants and loans**, starting in the 2018–19 academic year, allowing more students from low- and middle-income families to benefit from up to \$1,800 in non-repayable grants per year and up to \$10,000 in loans.
- **Expand access to grants for students with children**, starting in the 2018–19 academic year, allowing more:
  - full-time students with children to receive up to \$200 per month per child; and
  - part-time students with children to receive up to \$1,920 per year in grants.

### Employment Insurance Flexibilities

EI claimants have more options to take self-funded training while receiving Employment Insurance (EI) regular or fishing benefits.

- **Eligible claimants who have lost their jobs after several years in the workforce can now request permission from Service Canada** to attend self-funded full-time training at an approved institution. Starting August 5, 2018, when claimants receive this permission, they are considered to meet the EI



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program availability-for-work requirement and can continue receiving EI benefits while on training. Requests for permission can be submitted to Service Canada starting June 10, 2018.

- EI claimants can contact Service Canada to find out if they meet the criteria to be eligible for the permission provided by Service Canada. To be eligible, EI claimants must:
  - Have received less than 36 weeks of EI regular benefits in the previous 5 years before the beginning of their benefit period; and
  - Have paid at least 30% of the maximum EI annual premium in 7 of the last 10 years.
- It is estimated that about 7,000 adult learners per year will use this new option to enhance their skills while continuing to receive EI benefits. This represents an investment of more than \$130 million over four years. Claimants may also be eligible for student financial assistance.
- This new measure complements other opportunities already available to EI claimants wishing to go back to school to get the skills they need to find a good job:
  - **Claimants may choose to undertake training on their own initiative** to facilitate their return to work. To keep receiving benefits, claimants must continue to be capable of and available for work. They must also continue their job search and ensure that attendance at the course has not created obstacles to their work availability; or
  - **Claimants may be referred to training by a designated authority**, such as a province, territory or an Indigenous organization. The designated authority can refer claimants to training that would otherwise impede their availability for work if the authority agrees that the training is a reasonable part of the claimant's return-to-work action plan. In such cases, availability requirements are considered to be fulfilled and the claimant can continue receiving EI benefits.