Council Member Motion
For the Committee of the Whole Meeting of February 5, 2026

To:	Committee of the Whole	**Date:**	January 30, 2026
From:	Councillor Thompson		
Subject:	Post-secondary student affordability - advocacy to AVICC and UBCM		

SAME DAY CONSIDERATION

This motion requires same-day consideration by Council. Section 19(1)(d) of the Council Procedures Bylaw states: "In order for a motion to be considered for ratification the same day it is placed on the agenda, it must include rationale noting the reason for its time sensitivity. The reason for time sensitivity of this motion is that the deadline for AVICC resolutions is February 12, and the normal process for Council consideration of this motion, if supported by Committee, would be February 19.

BACKGROUND

"Students have been some of the hardest hit by our cost-of-living crisis. Limited availability of student housing and long commutes to campus on overcrowded buses have worsened our housing crisis and transportation services. Excessive demand for under-resourced student foodbanks has worsened our food security crisis. Limited protections for campus tenants, reduced revenues from a university funding model that's over-reliant on international students, and limited workers' rights for Graduate Research Assistants have only made these problems worse."

The above is from the Student Issues Backgrounder 2025 (See Appendix), a thoughtful advocacy brief prepared by a coalition of British Columbia's largest student organizations, including the University of Victoria Student Society. The Backgrounder presents a series of legislative and budgetary recommendations for the 2026 Provincial Budget, aiming to secure affordable education and ensuring students are not forced to choose between their studies and basic survival needs. The Backgrounder calls for provincial government action to:

- combat the affordability crisis
- enshrine on-campus student rights
- protect affordable education
- prioritize student safety
- invest in fast and efficient public transportation.

The Backgrounder provides a data-driven blueprint for stabilizing the post-secondary sector and supporting the future workforce of British Columbia. By highlighting that provincial funding for institutions has dropped to less than half of operating revenues, the brief illustrates how costs have shifted to students, threatening the accessibility of higher education. Implementing these

recommendations would not only mitigate immediate student poverty and food insecurity but also foster a safer, more equitable learning environment. In the end, safeguarding student well-being is essential for the long-term economic stability and competitiveness of the province.

RECOMMENDATION

1. That Council consider this matter on February 5, 2026.

2. That Council requests that the Mayor write to the Provincial Minister of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills to:
   1) Create 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 that institution to fund student food bank jobs.
   2) Instate a $10 flat-rate ferry fare for post-secondary students travelling as foot passengers, taking shape as a one-year trial.
   3) Explore and consult with student advocacy organizations in relation to all 15 of the recommendations made in the Student Issues Backgrounder 2025 provided to Council.

3. That Council endorse the following three resolutions, to be brought to the next AVICC and UBCM meetings:

A. $10 Per Day Flat Rate Ferry Fare for Post-Secondary Students

Whereas post-secondary students currently pay full adult BC Ferries fares, despite facing significant cost-of-living pressures and limited incomes, and this creates affordability barriers to travel to co-op employment, internships, conferences, networking opportunities, and travelling home to visit family, particularly for students who must regularly travel between Vancouver Island and the mainland;

And whereas indigenous students and students from rural communities are more likely to rely on ferry services, post-secondary students paying a full adult fare reinforces barriers to being able to travel home with ease, increasing inequities in mobility:

Therefore be it resolved that **AVICC and UBCM** advocate to the Honourable Minister Mike Farnworth, Minister of Transportation and Transit, for a $10/day flat rate ferry fare pilot program, during non-peak hours, for post-secondary students.

B. $1.50 Per Student Food Security Grant for Post-Secondary Food Security

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.

C. Post-secondary affordability

Whereas post-secondary students are facing greater cost-of-living challenges, due to a variety of factors including a lack of affordable housing options, longer and more expensive commutes, a lack of food security and underfunded food banks, and a range of other cost increases, resulting from a university funding model that's over reliant on international students;

And whereas, student advocacy organizations have put forward a Student Issues Backgrounder 2025 with policy solutions that can help make life more affordable for students on campus, help bring down housing and transportation costs, and help ensure students have access to affordable food and services that they need to thrive while pursuing higher education.

Therefore, be in resolved that AVICC and UBCM request that they Province implement all 15 policy solutions identified in the Student Issues Backgrounder 2025.

Respectfully submitted,

Councillor Dave Thompson

Attachment: Appendix 1_Student Issues Backgrounder 2025