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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Dalhousie Student Union (DSU) Responds to the Nova Scotia 2023-24 Budget**

**Halifax, NS** – Last Thursday, March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2023, the Government of Nova Scotia released the 2023-24 Budget, which saw promising increases to priority areas, such as healthcare, immigration & skilled trades, and business. DSU Vice President Academic & External Sydney Keyamo represented the Dalhousie Student Union at the budget briefing, with attendance ranging from senior government officials to key stakeholders. The budget includes a \$10 million investment in financial assistance to help students struggling with affordability; however, it fails to adequately address the growing inequities in student living expenses that necessitated this investment.

While we are glad to see increases to the Student Financial Assistance program in the provincial budget announcement, we await details confirming how this funding will be dispersed as well as how this funding will help sustainably maximize, or, at the very least, preserve access to postsecondary education regardless of income. In previous years, students have benefited from one-time subsidies and funding boosts during the COVID-19 pandemic, but these measures are not sustainable and leave students with a widening gap in their ability to access post-secondary education. Mechanisms such as increases in maximum assistance levels are one way to make sure that students have ongoing financial help, especially in wake of the reductions to the Canada Student Grants [at the federal level](#). We also need to more fundamentally address a chronically underfunded postsecondary system.

Nova Scotia continues to have the highest tuition rates both within the Maritimes and in the country. Having experienced the greatest levels of inflation since 1982, students are under more financial strain than ever. Given that financial aid maximums have not been changed since 2017, and the cost of living has risen dramatically, nearly one in five students receiving financial help has been demonstrated to have unmet needs.

Students and university graduates play an essential role given that postsecondary education is a crucial driver of both population and economic growth. Despite this, the budget overlooks the importance of supporting students and graduates, which is especially alarming given the stark reductions in accessibility and affordability of post-secondary education within the past two years.

Students and graduates from all academic disciplines make significant contributions to the growth of the province's workforce. Paid work experience whilst studying has a substantial impact on labour force connection, while programs like Graduate to Opportunity help students with employment issues after graduation. Despite recent increases in demand, neither Graduate to Opportunity nor Co-operative Education programs received additional funds in the recent budget.

Although the budget may not have addressed many student concerns, we will continue to emphasize key issues such as housing, accessibility, and affordability, especially as we look ahead to the 2024 negotiations on the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the province and its postsecondary institutions. We will continue to advance student concerns and ensure that all students can not only access post-secondary education, but also prosper and contribute back to their communities and province.

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### **About the Dalhousie Students' Union (DSU)**

The Dalhousie Students' Union (DSU) represents the collective voice and supports the diverse interests of over 20,000 students at Dalhousie University. The DSU supports over 250 student societies, builds community on campus through events, provides a range of essential student services and advocates for student rights to all levels of decision-makers within and beyond the University community.

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