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## **2014 provincial budget comes up short for students**

Edmonton, Alberta – The just-announced 2014 provincial budget added an additional \$32.5 million to the operating grants for post-secondary institutions, falling far short of making up for the \$147 million cut in Budget 2013. After some funding was restored in late 2013, there is still a \$41.7 million dollar hole, comparing 2012-13 numbers.

“Students are feeling the impact of the cuts last year. The additional \$32.5 million in operating funds is a good start, but not nearly enough to recover from the cuts last year when spread across 26 institutions. It’s \$42 million less than what our institutions received two years ago,” said Conner Brown, chair of the Council of Alberta University Students (CAUS) and VP External at the University of Calgary Students' Union. “But we know from recent experience that it could have been worse.”

Our aging campus infrastructure is not addressed in this budget. The funding cut last year for maintenance of existing buildings was not restored and deferred maintenance continues to accumulate. However, students are happy to see the Access to the Future Fund restored and that the province used this budget to fund its previous commitments on new capital projects.

On student financial aid, the province essentially held the line on existing funding while 2,000 additional students entered the system. Missing from the budget is funding for the rural and aboriginal bursaries promised in the 2012 election, a solution CAUS has advocated for to address Alberta’s post-secondary participation rate which is the lowest in Canada.

“This budget also leaves many unanswered questions in terms of affordability. Students want to see a long-term, sustainable cap on tuition tied to inflation, bigger investments in grants, and of course rules in place to protect students against new fees,” added Brown.

*The Council of Alberta University Students (CAUS) represents the interests of students at the University of Alberta, the University of Calgary, the University of Lethbridge, and Mount Royal University.*

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