



Council of Alberta University Students
#2, 9908 – 109 Street NW
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 1H5
780-297-4531
www.caus.net

For immediate release

November 17, 2014

Students rally in support of prioritizing post-secondary education

Edmonton, Alberta – Later this afternoon, students from Lethbridge and Calgary will join their Edmonton peers and converge at the Alberta Legislature in a show of support for keeping post-secondary education accessible and affordable for all Albertans. If approved by Minister Don Scott, recent proposals submitted by post-secondary institutions would see significant tuition hikes over and above the regulated annual CPI increase.

“It’s clear that there isn’t a strong vision for post-secondary education in Alberta. The last few years have been really tough for students and our institution – we’ve been hit hard by funding cuts. Students are working more to get through school while the costs just keep rising,” said Navneet Khinda, chair of the Council of Alberta University Students and VP External at the University of Alberta Students' Union. “Now, we are facing the possibility of tuition hikes again, tuition hikes that go against the tuition cap that students have fought so hard for. We are here today to show the Minister and the Premier the impacts tuition increases have on students and their families.”

Students hope their concerns about the accessibility of university programs in Alberta will be taken into consideration as Minister Scott finalizes his decision on the market modifier proposals. Students are also hoping to see a promise made by Premier Prentice during the PC leadership race realized in Budget 2015: the restoration of funding cuts to post-secondary institutions in 2013.

“It’s time for the government to prioritize post-secondary education for Alberta. Despite government promises, cuts have fallen on the backs of students – we have higher fees, we’ve lost professors, and we’ve lost programs,” said Khinda. “Alberta’s untapped resource is its students and investing in education is investing in our future.”

Students and student leaders from the University of Lethbridge, the University of Calgary, Mount Royal University as well as MacEwan University and the University of Alberta will be in attendance at the rally.

An announcement of the Minister’s decision on market modifier submissions was originally planned for November 17, but was postponed by the ministry late last week.

- 30 -

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

For more information contact:

Beverly Eastham, Executive Director
cell: 780-297-4531
e-mail: beverly@caus.net

Navneet Khinda, Chair
cell: 780-236-4949
e-mail: vp.external@su.ualberta.ca



Council of Alberta University Students
#2, 9908 – 109 Street NW
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 1H5
780-297-4531
www.caus.net

Backgrounder

In Alberta, tuition increases are currently tied to the Consumer Price Index (CPI) through the Tuition and Fees Regulation (TFR). The TFR, often referred to as the tuition cap, was introduced in 2006 in response to massive increases in tuition throughout the 1990s that resulted in a near tripling of tuition in real dollars, controlling for inflation. However, this provincial regulation leaves several loopholes that allow for higher increases. One of these allows for the use of “market modifiers” to increase tuition beyond the CPI cap.

Market Modifiers

The idea of market modifiers was introduced in 2010 by then minister of Advanced Education, Doug Horner, and allows institutions to benchmark tuition for certain programs against the cost of tuition at other universities in Canada, rather than to CPI. The introduction of market modifiers was a result of decreases in provincial base grant funding to institutions. Under pressure from universities to allow for tuition increases in order to fill their funding gaps, Minister Horner allowed for what he promised would be “one-time only” increases for tuition in certain programs.

In order to allow for these supposed “one-time” increases, the TFR was amended to permit the use of market modifiers. This amendment was never rescinded and remains in the regulation to this day. CAUS has advocated for its removal since 2010. This past July, the province surprised students calling for additional market modifier proposals.

By normalizing the use of market modifiers, the Government of Alberta has effectively scrapped the TFR, and reneged on their 2010 promise. If the current proposals are approved, their impact will be felt beyond those targeted faculties – all programs could be at risk, seeing as the government is no longer truly limiting tuition increases to inflation.

Proposals Submitted by Alberta Universities

University of Alberta: Economics, Pharmacy, Law, Rehabilitation Medicine, MBA

University of Calgary: Engineering, Law, MBA

University of Lethbridge: Management, Across-the-board tuition increase*

Mount Royal University: Business, Nursing, Science

MacEwan University: Chose not to submit proposals, opting to keep tuition affordable

*Note: The Market Modifier Proposal Submission Guidelines specify that institutions may **not** apply for an across-the-board tuition increase that would affect all students regardless of their program of study.

Why Regulation Matters

Limiting tuition to inflation allows students and families in Alberta to save money for school, knowing that any increases will be predictable and fair. Removing the tuition cap will make education less accessible for many Albertans, especially those from lower income families. Moreover, these increases will further contribute to already high debt load faced by students who rely on loans to pay their tuition.

CAUS Position on Tuition

Students are open to discussing way that our post-secondary institution can best be funded to ensure that higher education is accessible to all Albertans and affordable to students, their families, and the government. The Council of Alberta University Students is willing to be part of a broad, public conversation about policy changes that allow for tuition increases. We hope that this would be a large, robust public consultation on the reasons that such a change in our current public policy is believed to be necessary. Students are open to discussing ways that our post-secondary institutions can best be funded to ensure that higher education is accessible and affordable for all Albertans, and that the programs offered by our institutions remain of the highest quality.

Students want our government to be open and honest about its policies on tuition, rather than obscure cost increases behind market modifiers and other complex mechanisms that, by any other name, can be call tuition increase.