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Mental health recommendations lack specifics on campus communities

Edmonton, Alberta – The long awaited report of the Alberta Mental Health Review Committee was released today with the Government of Alberta accepting the report in principle and immediately implementing six of the 32 recommendations. Student advocates are worried, however, that mental health funding to post-secondary campuses will expire without action in the 2016 budget.

"It's great to see the review highlight campus environments as a recommendation," explained Romy Garrido, chair of the Council of Alberta University Students (CAUS) and VP External from the University of Calgary Students' Union. "However, we were hoping for a direct recommendation to continue and expand funding to post-secondary institutions that is set to expire this year."

In 2013, Alberta Health and Wellness launched pilot projects at post-secondary campuses across Alberta including \$9 million over three years to the University of Alberta, University of Calgary, and University of Lethbridge, and later adding funding to other institutions. This funding has led to new psychiatrists, counsellors, and programs for post-secondary students and has found success in tackling the problems described in the Alberta Mental Health Review - and is funding that will disappear without action in the 2016 Budget.

The Alberta Mental Health Review identifies post-secondary campuses in the seventh recommendation, and gives a timeline of implementation of one year:

Create healthy and supportive campus environments through health promotion programming and enhancements to addiction and mental health campus services.

"We have asked the Alberta Mental Health Review Committee and the Government of Alberta directly to renew this funding, and to expand it across the system on a per-student basis - we're hoping an increased commitment to mental health means that we will see that in the next budget," said Garrido.

Campuses are the ideal setting to catch, triage and properly treat many of the common mental health diagnoses that emerge in younger adults, as treatments are often more difficult and costly the later the diagnosis is made.

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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

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