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Government cuts to post-secondary a mistake say students

Edmonton, Alberta - Alberta's budget promised to put students first — however, when he stood up in the Legislature to deliver his speech, Minister of Finance Doug Horner delivered a blow to Alberta's post-secondary education in the form of a 7% cut to operating grants to universities, colleges, and technical institutes.

"This is the biggest cut to post-secondary education in 20 years. These cuts are going to have an immediate impact on the quality of our post-secondary education, and potentially longer impacts on the affordability and accessibility of degrees in Alberta," said Raphael Jacob, chair of the Council of Alberta University Students (CAUS) and VP External of the University of Calgary Students' Union. "This will mean larger class sizes, more restricted class selection, and the prospects of downloading costs onto students that will price it out of the reach of many."

Other highlights include ending the Summer Temporary Employment Program (STEP) which helps fund summer employment opportunities in Alberta's non-profit sector for post-secondary students. The budget also fails to make good on an election promise to create a rural bursary starting in September 2013.

Upon becoming Premier, Alison Redford promised institutions three years of 2% increases. While budget 2013 would be the second year of the three-year commitment, institutions will now be faced with a 7% cut.

"We are deeply worried about institutions taking these cuts back to students in the form of tuition and fee hikes and we are working with the government to meet the Premier's commitment to not increase tuition," added Colten Yamagishi, President of the University of Alberta Students' Union. "Investing in post-secondary education and in students should be the long-term answer to the problems our society faces. Instead, this budget takes a huge step backwards."

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

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