

The 2013 provincial budget placed Alberta's post-secondary system in a challenging position of meeting the needs of a booming economy that is in desperate need of skilled workers, while at the same time coping with fewer public dollars and already high costs and high debt to enter the system for potential students.

Alberta's post-secondary participation rate is the lowest in Canada. In order to succeed and prosper our province needs to improve and the Government of Alberta has set a goal to increase enrolment among underrepresented groups.

The recent budget puts that goal and the quality of our post-secondary education in jeopardy — in the short-term — despite the fact that our post-secondary students and our universities, colleges, and technical institutes are Alberta's long-term solutions. By removing the financial barriers to obtaining a post-secondary education, protecting the quality of that education, and providing a safe environment within which to study we can secure Alberta's future prosperity.

STUDENTS RECOMMEND:

- Keeping Alberta's tuition cap to inflation as Premier Redford promised;
- Investing strategically to increase participation by underrepresented groups in the post-secondary system;
- Closing the legal loophole on backdoor tuition hikes through non-instructional fees without student approval;
- Reversing cuts to student summer employment programs that work for both students and Alberta's non-profit community;
- Making student residences exempt from property taxes and investing those savings into deferred maintenance in residences;
- Establishing the rural and Aboriginal student bursary promised in the 2012 election.

KEEPING THE TUITION PROMISE

Premier Alison Redford promised in the lead up to the provincial budget that "we are not going to balance our budget on the backs of post-secondary students. We will not raise tuition." Students were relieved as even before the budget was tabled our institutions were lobbying the Government of Alberta to raise tuition beyond the tuition cap of CPI.

Alberta's tuition cap provides predictability for students and their families when planning for post-secondary education. Compared to the yo-yo of freezes and then drastic increases found in other provinces this system has provided stability for nearly a decade and is endorsed by government, students, and Albertans alike.

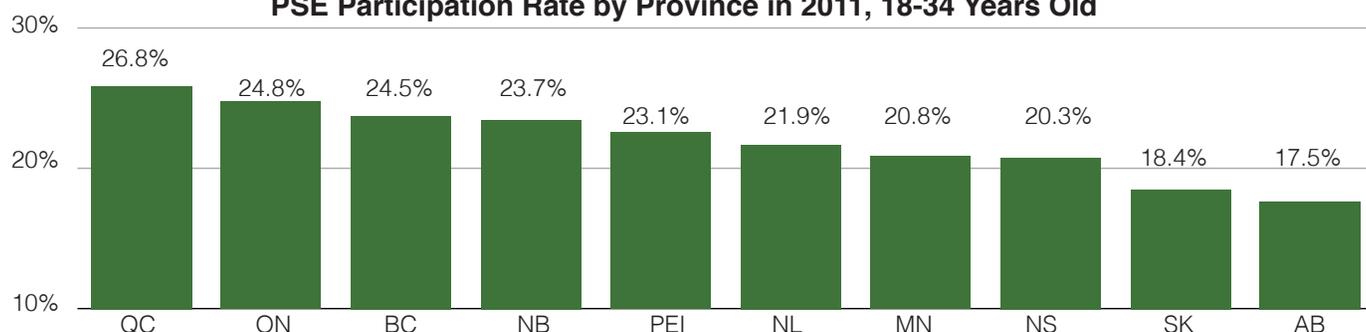
A one-time exemption was offered to institutions to adjust programs that were out of step to the market in 2009 and the time has come to close the market modifier exemptions and ensure that the stability offered by the tuition cap is guaranteed.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP

- **Press the need to keep tuition and fees affordable and predictable within your caucus or in committee**
- **Talk about post-secondary education and the need in Alberta for more skilled labour with your constituents and colleagues**
- **Discuss policies that reduce the financial barriers to rural and Aboriginal Albertans to pursuing a post-secondary education with your constituency or political party**
- **Press the Deputy Premier and new Minister of Enterprise and Advanced Education to ensure that the cuts to operating funding will not take place in the classroom or impact the quality of education**

LONG-TERM THINKING IN POST-SECONDARY

PSE Participation Rate by Province in 2011, 18-34 Years Old



Source: Campus Alberta Planning Resource, November 2012

INVESTING IN POST-SECONDARY STUDENTS

The cuts to post-secondary operating budgets came as a shock to our campus communities. The Government of Alberta promised three years of 2% increases to operating funds and 2013 was the second year of that promise. Instead, institutions are faced with a 6.8% cut to their operating funds.

This will have a direct impact in the classroom - larger class sizes, reduced faculty, smaller class selections - but it is too early to tell the full impact of what these cuts will mean. What we are hoping for is that impact on education will be as small as possible.

We are calling on the Government of Alberta to re-invest on our campuses as soon as our fiscal situation allows - in the 2014 budget - and to take steps through the mandate letters to ensure student input to minimize the impact these cuts will have on our education.

CLOSING THE NON-INSTRUCTIONAL FEE LOOPHOLE

In 2009 when the Government of Alberta froze operating funds to institutions - not cutting them, merely freezing them for one year - the University of Alberta and University of Calgary responded by unilaterally imposing non-instructional fees on students for a variety of "services."

Prior to 2009 non-instructional fees went to students for approval - items like health and dental plans or transit passes routinely go to students for approval -

but these new fees were not for new services but rather a way to obtain new revenue to replace lost funding from the government, much like a situation we see today. We want to see a return to where fees for instruction are governed by public policy around tuition and additional fees are approved by students for specific services, rather than approved by institutions as backdoor tuition.

<http://caus.net/fees>

INCREASING ACCESS FOR RURAL AND ABORIGINAL ALBERTANS

In 2012 election campaign the Progressive Conservatives promised to create a new rural bursary worth \$18 million in 2013 - fiscal realities have changed but it remains a great idea. We still want to see it happen - read more about it online.

<http://caus.net/access>

WHO IS CAUS

The Council of Alberta University Students (CAUS) represents over 70,000 university students across Alberta. We represent undergraduate students from the University of Alberta, the University of Calgary and the University of Lethbridge to the public, government and other post-secondary education stakeholders.

Council of Alberta University Students

780-297-4531 / duncan@caus.net
#2, 9908 - 109 Street NW Edmonton, AB T5K 1H5
www.caus.net / @caus