

Thirteen per cent hike. . . at least

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In a report released Tuesday, the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission recommended an increase of 14.7 per cent in government funding for the Maritime provinces. For the province of New Brunswick, this works out to a figure of 12.6 per cent.

Traditionally, the provincial government has met these recommendations. Increases in government support are mirrored by increased tuition for students.

However, UNB President James Downey predicts fees will increase over the 12.6 per cent figure. The actual percentage figure is closer to thirteen per cent, he said and costs are growing at a greater rate than this. In addition, the university is already facing a deficit.

The difference in figures comes about when one takes into account that the government's fiscal year begins March 1, while the university's commences April 1. In this way, the university benefits from the new higher figure.

Downey said he was not surprised at the recommendation as he had assumed the commission would be as consistent as in the past. He said he was relieved as it could have been worse, but most of all, he was disappointed in the amount. A thirteen per cent increase is not adequate to meet the real costs of the university, he said, especially coming hard on the heels of government underfunding.

Downey said he could not say at this time what the tuition increase will be, citing budget committees and the board of governors as the reason.

The commission's recommendations are based on an existing regional funding formula, where each province is responsible for grants to institutions located within its borders and makes contributions to the other two provinces with respect to its students enrolled in university programs not offered in the province of residence.

The recommended increases contain no provisions for enrollment change or offsetting tuition fee increases. With regard to tuition fees, the commission continues to expect them to increase with the cost of living and government would be expected to increase student aid provisions accordingly.

SRC President Gerard Finnan maintained the MPHEC suggestion that students supply a greater proportion of university revenue "only shuffles the problem from one hand to another."

The Federation of New Brunswick Faculty Associations said the discrepancy in operating assistance between New Brunswick and the rest of the Maritimes is "absolutely unacceptable" and blamed the provincial government for the financial crisis the universities of New Brunswick face.

"The government ought to consider doing more," said Downey, adding he intended to suggest it to the province. He said the government improving their contribution would be an "enlightened gesture," especially in view of the fact that funding has not been adequate in the past.



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The top float in the parade. The Bruns took away honourable mention. (It's our paper and we can say what we want.)