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Native student aid superficial Changes only political

SASKATOON (CUP) — Last minute changes to the federal native post-secondary student aid program won't soften the blow of last spring's cutbacks, native leaders say.

Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs Pierre Cadieux announced nine changes to ministry guidelines on funding for treaty/status Indians' post-secondary education September 12.

While the changes respond to some of the native groups' demands, native leaders and opposition critics say the move is designed to divert attention from cutbacks imposed last spring.

"I would say that the short term changes are practical responses to our concerns," said University of Saskatchewan student Angus McLean, a member of the Saskatoon Native Students' Coalition.

But McLean said the changes weren't satisfactory and some students say they are a political gesture.

The changes, effective this fall, are a response to demonstrations, hunger strikes and pressure from native students, leaders and supporters, McLean said.

The new guidelines give First Nations organizations more control over federal money. Also the ministry has agreed to fund a child care support program and consider providing counselling services, subsidizing rent and travel costs and providing course incentives for native students.

Critics say the efforts are more superficial than anything.

"I don't think the changes even begin to address the problem," NDP critic for post-secondary education Chris Axworthy said.

Axworthy said native organizations may be able to allocate their own funds, but they are dividing up a smaller pie.

"The real issue for those guidelines is, can we ensure that every Indian student who wants to go to university and is qualified can receive financial support," he said. "The answer last year was no and the answer this year is no."

Statistics show 12 per cent of the Native population in Canada receives any post-secondary education, compared with 20 per cent of the population as a whole.

Native students were first hit with enrollment limitations last

year when the post-secondary education assistance budget was frozen at \$111 million. This year it has been capped at \$131 million and hundreds of students have been turned away.

Cadieux says he was prepared to discuss any new information on treaty rights that pertained to post secondary education, to resolve the problem.

Many native students doubt Cadieux's commitment to treaty rights.

"It will be a cold day in hell before Indian Affairs will acquiesce to the treaty position," McLean said. "And that cold day in hell can only be provided by the courts."

Single parent families and families where both parents are students will again be eligible for full assistance.

Rain wear

by Sharon and Rudy Haugeneder

The moisture the world's rain forests return to the atmosphere through evaporation is critical in maintaining the amount of rain and snow that falls elsewhere on the planet, warn scientists.

An average tropical tree returns about 120 gallons more water

each day than it uses. The common North American birch tree, however, uses about 20 per cent more water than it gives back, according to scientists. A birch tree needs 85 gallons of water daily to thrive, and returns only 70 gallons through evaporation.

Scientists have calculated that Canadian forests and agriculture need approximately 6.5 times more water to thrive than they return to the atmosphere.

The average acre of Amazon jungle — each supporting around 3000 tropical trees — returns about 360,000 gallons more moisture each day than the rain forest uses. About 25 per cent of Brazil's rain forest has been destroyed to date.

Before Amazon destruction began in the early 1970s, the once 5.5-million-square-kilometre rain forest pumped 3.52 trillion gallons of moisture into the atmosphere each day. The Amazon used to contribute 12.84 quadrillion gallons of water to the planet every year, say scientists. But that's dropped considerably since deforestation.

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