Tuition fees continue to soar

Students cringe as tuition rises

BY CHRIS BONDAR

OTTAWA(CUP) - A new report from Statistics Canada has confirmed what many students already know — tuition fees across the country have skyrocketed in the last nine years.

The report blames the tuition fee increases on a reduction in education spending by Ottawa and the provinces.

Government funding, including both provincial and federal grants, now make up less than 58 per cent of Canadian universities' operating revenue, down from 74 per cent in 1980.

This has resulted in a drastic increase in tuition fees for post-secondary students.

Across Canada, tuition fees for undergraduate arts programs have increased by 125.9 per cent since 1990, resulting in an average cost of $3,658.

Nova Scotia general arts students pay the highest tuition at just over $4,100 a year.

Alberta arts students have seen the greatest increases, with fees almost tripling in the last nine years.

Meanwhile, medicine and dentistry programs have been hit the hardest of all university programs. Medical fees have increased 32 per cent to $7,377 this year alone, while dentistry fees have increased 15 per cent to $5,699.

In Ontario, fees for dentistry programs have more than quadrupled since 1995 and medicine fees have doubled or quadrupled, depending on the institution.

The numbers don't surprise student leaders.

"The reality of this is that it will continue until both levels of government begin to work on putting money back into the post-secondary education system," said Jason Abeig, national director of the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations. "Tuition fees simply back-fill the hole left by the reduced government funding."

Michael Conlon, national chairperson of the Canadian Federation of Students, has similar feelings.

"The report essentially confirms our analysis that there is a direct relation between the government cuts and the increase in tuition fees," said Conlon.

The report did note British Columbia has frozen public university tuition fees for five years, and Quebec has also kept fees low for residents of the province.

In addition, the most recent tuition fee increases for the 1999-2000 academic year are at a 7 per cent average across Canada, down from 11 per cent in each of the past two years.

"The report shows a good news, bad news scenario," said Conlon. "While the fee hikes are down a little bit this year, the report makes a very compelling argument that the federal government must address the issue of federal transfer payments for post-secondary education."

Government officials, who were still studying the report, were not able to comment by press time.

Frosh Week welcome

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as a T-Shirt, Hat, Coffee mug, Laundry Bag and coupons. The bags cost $48 and account for half of the revenue of frosh week — $52,000 in all. Tickets for other events, including several concerts and special events, must be purchased individually, range from $17.00 to $5.00 each and totalling $45.00 for all extra events.

By contrast at Saint Mary's University, Frosh Packs cost $65 each, but include tickets for all events, many of them similar to events at Dalhousie. Like Dalhousie, participation at SMU is up, with more than 850 Frosh packs being sold — 150 more than their previous record.

"There seems to be an incredible interest level this year," said SMU student association vice-president Mike Gibbs. "Everyone seems to be really enthusiastic, full of energy and wanting to get involved."

SMU orientation may be $20.00 cheaper, but the cost doesn't seem to be keeping Dalhousie students away. Although they had already attended a Summer Orientation session, first year students Alana Coolen and Chantal Fougere are quite happy to participate in this frosh week festivities.

"It's definitely a good way to meet new people," said Coolen.

"It's like a giant summer orientation, except more expensive," added Fougere, who had just purchased tickets to several orientation events.

The bigger budget for orientation this year reflects a number of things, including more events, and a second promotional mail-out to all first year students in the summer.

Orientation week coordinator Level Chan says these new expenditures have been partially offset by increased fundraising. Moreover, Frosh week only devotes a small portion of its budget — $7,000 in all — to salaries, with most of the work being done by the more than 200 volunteers during the week.

"Even though frosh week is bigger, there will not be any additional burden on the Dalhousie Student Union," said Chan, pointing out that Frosh week has already raised $10,000 through sponsorship — nearly $4,000 more than budgeted.

As for welcoming new students, he says the event is a total success.

"Asides from concerns about classes and registration, meeting people is the major concern of first year students," Chan said. "That's one item we deal with particularly at frosh week."

Students wishing to get involved in one of the several remaining frosh events can buy tickets on the first level of the Students Union Building.

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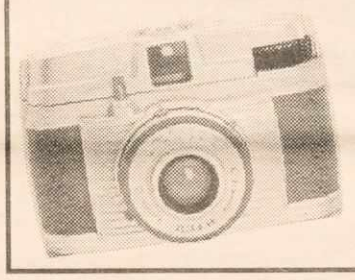

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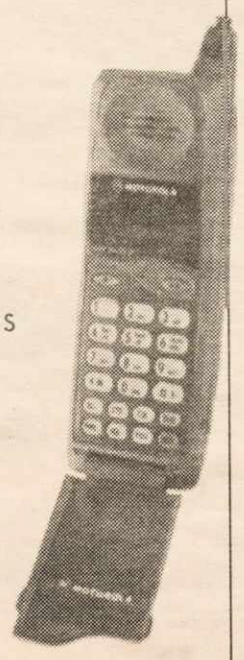

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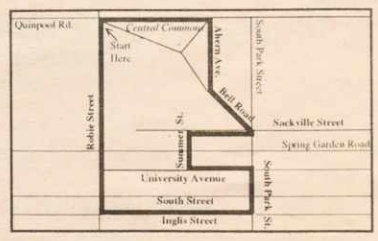

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