

Gov't grants 5.5 %

Tuition increases a certainty

by Valerie Mansour
Canadian University Press

Tuition fee increases and further cutbacks in services will be awaiting Nova Scotia students when they return to post-secondary institutions next fall.

The Nova Scotia government has announced an increase in operating grants of 5.5%, substantially less than the 9.5% recommended by the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission. The MPHEC made their recommendation after considering the institutions' original request of 17%.

The decision has disturbed members of the academic community and has prompted the resignation of one member of the MPHEC, Guy MacLean, Dalhousie University academic vice-president. He said the government has once again ignored the recommendations of the commission. "It makes me doubtful as to the use of the MPHEC if the government just goes ahead and applies to universities the guidelines of every other department."

The increase means almost certain substantial increases in fees. And there will be more cutbacks," MacLean said.

B.J. Arseneault, chairperson of the Students' Union of Nova Scotia (SUNS) said he was shocked at the funding level. "It contradicts what the provincial government said earlier. The universities are now under tremendous strain. Students are discouraged. They'll be paying more for less," said Arseneault.

"The government is leading universities down a path of self-destruction. Tuition will go up and enrolment will decrease. This will lead to the death of our smaller institutions."

Arseneault feels the MPHEC should abandon its practise of

recommending grant levels. "Their research is a service to institutions, so perhaps that's all they should do," said Arseneault.

SUNS has not yet decided what they are going to do about the government announcement but will meet March 3 and 4 to make their plans.

For two years the MPHEC has called on institutions to increase tuition fees with the cost of living. The only Nova Scotia institution to raise their tuition last year was St. Francis Xavier in Antigonish. Rev. Greg MacKinnon, president of the university said his university is in a difficult situation. "We have to do everything possible to avoid another increase", he said.

John Keyston, executive-director of the Atlantic Association of Universities said the situation looks bad for the institutions. "But the picture isn't exactly clear yet, he said. "We still need more information. Keyston said the 5.5% is actually a decrease in the institutions' actual spending power. "It's not even equal to the increase in the cost of living," he said.

The MPHEC has met and will soon be releasing the specific grants to each university. Until then it is not known how much tuition will rise in the various institutions. Terry Donahue, the province's education minister has said he hopes administrations will not increase tuition more than the cost of living. Some administrators said the increase could be in the range of \$75-\$200.

Unlike last year the Maritime Provinces did not make a joint announcement. The governments of Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick are expected to announce their decision within the next few days.

Dalhousie hit hard

by Alan Adams and Brent Melanson

Tuition could increase between \$150 and \$200 at Dal next year said University president Henry Hicks after hearing of the Nova Scotia government's announcement of a 5.5 per cent increase to higher education institutions in the province.

"The decision will require us to increase tuition fees," said Hicks. "A decision can be expected before the end of March." The Budget Committee of the Board of Governors will be meeting in March and the amount of an increase is on the agenda. Hicks described the government's decision as "very selfish, thus making it extremely difficult financially for next year."

Hicks said the university is "almost sure of increasing tuition fees for foreign students by \$750," bringing their tuition to \$1700.

Tim Harding, Financial of-

ficer of the SUNS Steering Committee, described the announcement as "a slap in the face and a kick in the back for all post-secondary students in Nova Scotia." "Increasing tuition by the cost of living is like comparing it to the cost of hamburger", added Harding. He accused the government of trying to make the \$750 increase to foreign students "appear like something else than differential fees", which Education Minister Donahue has said his government opposed.

Student Council President Mike Power called the 5.5% increase "outrageous and unacceptable". He added that residence fees are also expected to increase at many Nova Scotia institutions. Power regretted the extra burden on foreign students. "It is deplorable that any government would force the implementation of discrim-

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Differential fees too

by Valerie Mansour
Canadian University Press

As well as paying the expected increase in tuition fees next fall, foreign students enrolling in the Maritimes will be faced with an additional \$750 charge.

The Nova Scotia government announced February 23 that the Maritimes would be implementing the differential fees structure, similar to that now in existence in Alberta, Ontario, and Quebec. Nova Scotia will deduct from each institutions' grant, \$750 per foreign student. The other two provinces have yet to indicate the amount they will be charging.

"The province is not attempting to discourage foreign students from studying in Nova Scotia", said education minister Terry Donahue. "I do feel, however, that the present situation considered, foreign students must be willing to pay their way to a greater degree than in the past."

Differential fees will only apply to students enrolling in a new program. Returning students will be permitted to pay the same fee as Canadian students.

University administrators in the province have spoken against differential fees. Dalhousie president Henry Hicks said Canada has a responsibility to underdeveloped countries.

Rev. Greg MacKinnon, president of St. Francis Xavier University said he is terribly disappointed about the decision. "The presidents met

with the education minister and suggested setting quotas as a compromise if they're so worried about an influx of foreign students. But they didn't listen to us and they didn't tell us why."

Carmen Moir, deputy minister of education said that it's hard to say if the move will have any effect on the province's reputation internationally. "Both sides can be argued. But, by the experience of the other three provinces that have increased their foreign students fee, it seems there were no substantial changes."

Bill White, president of the Dalhousie Association of Graduate Students said he is "appalled, dismayed, and perplexed that the government has undertaken this program with little input, no rationale, and apparently little humanity."

"We are demanding an immediate meeting with the education minister asking for

further elaboration as to why the decision was made," he said.

"I am somewhat perturbed that Donahue had input into the decision. During the September election campaign he spoke to Dal graduate students and categorically stated he was opposed to the imposition of differential fees," White said.

"We would suggest to the maritime governments that they re-examine their position in light of the inevitable decline in foreign student enrolment from lesser and underdeveloped countries."

"Foreign students are not a burden", White said. "They are an asset, culturally, economically, politically and socially. Any such move would only hinder Nova Scotia's participation in the world community."

There are about 2000 foreign students in the Maritimes, a large proportion of whom are graduate students.

Coming soon

Next week: Cutbacks supplement

The provincial government is spending federal money allocated for education on other areas. They do not take the MPHEC seriously, and they do not seem to care if students can afford to get an education or not. A look at why they are doing this and what it means for students and universities.

Two weeks: A supplement concerning International Women's Day