

Hohol has made up his mind-foreign students should pay more



Dr. Bert Hohol, advanced education minister.

by Kevin Gillese

In an effort to understand the government's decision to institute foreign student differential tuition fees in Alberta, *The Gateway* conducted a tape-recorded interview last week with Dr. Bert Hohol, provincial minister of advanced education, and asked him for the specifics behind the policy decision he announced over the summer.

GATEWAY — Why were foreign students chosen for higher tuition fee increases than anyone else in Alberta?
HOHOL — Well, I feel that several generations of Canadians and Albertans have invested heavily to build and put

together institutes of higher learning here in Alberta. It is through their sweat and suffering our universities have been built. To ask foreign students to pay more than Alberta students is responsible and fair.

GATEWAY — Is it a move to reduce the number of foreign students in Alberta?

HOHOL — No, it does not take away assistance to foreign students. I think if you move away from the emotionalism of the argument, a lot remains to substantiate the government's position. The \$500 in tuition fees out of the \$4,000 or \$5,000 it costs a foreign student is not too great a percentage. Foreign students right now are getting a bargain rate on a premium education. Our increase will be, as I told the House, "significant but not punitive."

(Ed. Note — it will be between 300 and 400 percent)

GATEWAY — How much added revenue will be generated by such increases?

HOHOL — Well, I don't have the exact figures with me right now.

GATEWAY — Can you get them?

HOHOL — Well, they're only estimates anyway and they vary from year to year.

GATEWAY — Can you give me a ballpark figure?

HOHOL — In Ontario it would mean millions of dollars.

GATEWAY — How much would it mean in Alberta?

HOHOL — Well, it would not be as significant as that, here.

GATEWAY — Do you know how much it would be?

HOHOL — Just let me say that every undergraduate student in Alberta is

subsidized between \$4,000 and \$4,500 each year by the government and that's the subsidy we're paying to each foreign student in the province.

GATEWAY — Well, correct me if I'm wrong, but isn't it true that large faculties such as Science and Arts are relatively low subsidy faculties, somewhere around \$1,200 to \$1,500 per student per year?

HOHOL — Yes, it's something like that.

GATEWAY — And isn't it true that the quota faculties — Medicine, Law and Engineering — are relatively high-cost faculties, with subsidies of \$6,000 or more per student per year?

HOHOL — Yes, I believe that's close enough.

GATEWAY — But isn't it also true that each quota faculty has an additional quota on foreign students? And in medicine it runs about 1 or 1½ percent and is something similar with the others?

HOHOL — Yes, that's true.

GATEWAY — Well, how can you say the government is subsidizing each foreign student between \$4,000 and \$4,500 when most foreign students are not allowed to study in high-cost quota faculties and are instead in low-cost faculties?

HOHOL — This is a specious argument and you are not using logic. The institutions are there and the government provides money to the institutions, not to the different faculties. How the university decides to apportion the money to its own faculties is left to its discretion, we don't do that. Students can choose any faculty they want to when they go to university.

GATEWAY — But didn't you just agree

that quota faculties restrict foreign student enrolment severely?

HOHOL — Yes.

GATEWAY — And yet you said students can go into any faculty they want to?

HOHOL — Yes.

GATEWAY — Don't you see a contradiction there?

HOHOL — Let me say that we give \$4,000 each year to pay for the education of each undergraduate. It's totally academic to suggest that standards should not be and cannot be lived with at universities. Are you suggesting government should intrude into affairs of the university and ask that they charge differential fees for the different faculties? If you start to assess low fees for foreign students in Arts than foreign students in Medicine, then you're really in the jungle.

GATEWAY — But don't you agree that significantly different if the province government subsidizes most foreign students only \$1,500 per year, rather than \$4,500 per year?

HOHOL — Yes... But we're not going to tell the universities what to do. On the foreign student fee issue, I've made my mind and people will just have to live with that.

GATEWAY — What will happen if a university's Board of Governors do not recommend differential fees for foreign students? How would you react to that?

HOHOL — Well, as we say in the House, Mr. Gillese, that is a hypothetical situation and I don't think I have to answer that question.



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