

# Question and answer with the

**Interview by Ken Bosman**

Dave Russell, the Deputy Premier, has been the Advanced Education Minister since May, 1987.

First elected as a M.L.A. in 1967, Russell was part of the original Peter Lougheed team.

He received his B.A. Architecture from the University of Manitoba in 1954, and then earned an M.A., also in Architecture, from Cornell University in 1956.

Fresh from the Hospitals and Medicare portfolio, Russell is no stranger to controversy.

Russell's first year in Advanced Education brought a three percent cut in operating grants to Universities.

A special government program which provides matching funds for private donations to education has more donors than money, and is several years behind in matching donations.

Recently, the Minister's promise of a "zero percent cut" next year to education has drawn fire from student groups in Calgary and Lethbridge.

The Gateway interviewed the Minister in his office on October 22.

**"The Premier has said he's hoping that, at the very worst, education will receive a zero percent cut."**

**Gateway:** Tuition is limited by the Province to 12 percent of the operating budget of the University. U of A President Horowitz has said he might push to see it raised to 15 percent. That's about \$300 per student more.

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Is there a move to remove the 12 percent cap?

**Russell:** No there isn't.

Alberta is fairly rich. For reasons of accessibility, we'd like tuition fees to be relatively low.

Frankly, students get a really good deal. The public picks up 89 or 90 percent of the cost of their education.

We hope to keep it that way.

**"We're still providing, on a per student basis, the highest funding of any province."**

**Gateway:** What about "non tuition" fees such as the U of A's "library and computer" fee. The U of A Students' Union is going to court because they feel the extra fee violates the maximum 10 percent annual tuition increase allowed by the Province.

**Russell:** So far we've stood back and haven't intervened. The Universities are autonomous.

We have determined that the [library and computer] fees are tax deductible however.

**Gateway:** But you can control tuition fees, why not "non-tuition" fees?

**Russell:** You're right, we could. But it's only become an issue this year. If the Boards of Governors abuse their powers we will step in the same way we did with tuition.

**Gateway:** Do funding cuts to education mean the Government's policy on accessibility has changed?

**Russell:** No. We would like to see anybody who wants to pursue a higher education have access to one.

As the province has grown and developed the system has expanded to keep up with the demand.

That will continue.

**Gateway:** But some institutions, like the U of A, have raised enrollment standards at least partly because of money.

**Russell:** I disagree. I don't think money is why they are limiting enrollment.

I think they want to establish quotas in their faculties. I think they want a maximum size, and to reorganize the ratio between graduate and undergraduate students.

If the U of A raises entrance requirements from 65 to 70 percent that's no guarantee that they will reduce size.

I've had students say to me 'Ok, I'll just work harder and get a 70 percent average.'

**Gateway:** So you're saying it's institutional concerns, and not money, that is driving the changes?

**Russell:** Looking at the U of A's 21st century plans, reducing the size of the student population is one way to achieve their objectives.

**Gateway:** But are these objectives consistent with the principle of universal access you've just mentioned? There seems a conflict.

**Russell:** Not necessarily. The U of A raises a good question. They say 'we don't think we should be larger than 25,000' that's basically their bottom line.

But if the U of A is full at 25,000 and the province keeps growing, then we'll probably need more institutions.

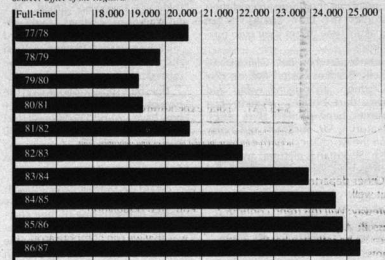
**Gateway:** So you endorse "farming out" the first and second years to the colleges?

**Russell:** If the U of A is limited, the obvious place for students to go is

**U of A Enrollment Patterns**

	Winter	Winter*	Spring	Summer	Total
	Full-time	Part-time	Part-time	Part-time	
1977-78	19,491	3,956	3,834	3,416	30,697
1978-79	18,764	3,644	3,819	3,067	29,294
1979-80	18,117	3,585	3,968	3,060	28,730
1980-81	18,273	3,558	3,701	2,736	28,268
1981-82	19,571	3,708	3,755	2,905	29,939
1982-83	21,045	4,030	4,221	3,307	32,603
1983-84	22,908	4,354	4,977	3,422	35,661
1984-85	23,617	4,339	5,354	3,691	37,001
1985-86	23,828	4,574	5,388	3,306	37,096
1986-87	24,302	4,710	4,978	3,113	37,103

\* Includes Off-Campus Evening Credit Program  
Source: Office of the Registrar



the community colleges.

If the transfer and admission requirements are good, that system should work.

It may well be, however, that we have to build another university.

**Gateway:** What are the priorities for funding withing the Post-Second-

ary envelope?

**Russell:** We try to respond to need.

Historically speaking, when Peter Lougheed went to the U of A there was one university with 3,500 students for the whole province. That's not so long ago.

We now have four universities.

**Gateway:** So you're saying that enrollment is a factor in funding? That funding is somehow enrollment driven?

**Russell:** It has been until very recently.

In 1982 we introduced enrollment growth funding - this money was based on enrollment.

That was dropped this year as a budget restraint measure.

**Gateway:** What then is the funding outlook for education? How will it do relative to other areas?

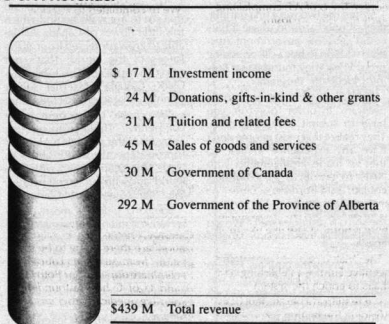
**Russell:** It's our number one priority. The Premier has publicly stated that it is number one.

**Gateway:** What then are we looking at next year for funding?

**Russell:** I don't know yet, we've just started our budget work for next year.

The Premier has said he's hoping that, at very worse, education will receive a zero percent cut.

**U of A Revenue:**



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