

Lamrock reacts to McKenna government's budget cuts

by Gordon Loane
Brunswickan News

The McKenna government's decision to cut funding to universities is drawing a mixed review from UNB Student Union President Kelly Lamrock.

"In a lot of ways it's hard to fault the provincial government for the size of the cut," said Lamrock, referring to the fact that only two per cent is being trimmed this year while federal transfer payments to New Brunswick will drop approximately seventeen per cent.

"I believe the cut in funding to New Brunswick universities is the lowest rate in the country," he said. Lamrock is quick to grab some of the credit for this. "We have been effective in getting the message out that this is



UNB SU President Kelly Lamrock

Photo: Warren Watson

not the area where government should be cutting."

Lamrock is quite confident that UNB can absorb the cuts without turning to drastic increases in tuition fees. "I'm more optimistic about that than I was before the budget," he said. "I think it's a cut that can be dealt with without cutting essential services or faculty, or hiking tuition too much."

Lamrock said he would be astounded if the administration had to go beyond a five per cent hike this year which is about the usual level that increases have been held to in the past. Further, he said, "I think another cap of five per cent over two years is now realistic, given the room they have to cut cost internally."

Turning to other matters, Lamrock

took a swipe at the McKenna government for its lack of action on reforms to the student loan program.

"We have been promised reforms for two years and I know they have several models on the table that are being looked at," he said.

Lamrock said a few bone-headed rules in the system need to be looked at, particularly the eighty per cent work contribution. "We need to revise the student loan program so it doesn't trap people in a situation where they don't have any money."

Lamrock has had his own well-publicized problems with the provincial student loan system but finally got his loan for this school year earlier this month.

The SU President was a bit more positive about the McKenna

governments' decision to increase overall funding for student loans by some three million dollars in 1996-97.

Lamrock also welcomed the announcement of a \$750,000 increase in the provincial government's student summer employment program, and offered to assist the provincial government with ideas in this area.

He suggests the government use the UNB Student Union's new Employment Opportunities Centre to help with entrepreneurship programs. "If they want to talk about a job corps for example, we are certainly willing to come up with some good ideas so we can give people some practical work experience instead of just putting them in make work projects," Lamrock concluded.

Administration reaction continued...

to speculate on actual tuition fee increases, but he threw out a few hints.

"Very roughly, it takes a three percent increase in tuition fees to offset a one percent decrease in the provincial operating grant," he said.

"So if the effective reduction from government were close to three percent that would take us to a six to nine percent increase in tuition," O'Sullivan cautioned.

But O'Sullivan said this is not a forecast at this point in UNB's budget process. "Certainly across the country last year fee increases averaged ten percent and at UNB it was less than 6%," he pointed out. "In Ontario, most institutions will be raising fees by twenty percent next year," he said.

O'Sullivan says UNB plans to balance its budget next year and all options are

on the table including tuition fee increases and budget cuts.

The question of whether UNB will begin to replace faculty members who retired two years ago is one of the budget considerations, according to O'Sullivan.

Fourteen full time professors retired in 1994-95 and are slated to be replaced in the upcoming budget year. A further 55 professors who retired in 1995-96 would not be replaced until 1997-98.

"The only question this year is will we begin the replacement of the fourteen who left two years ago," said O'Sullivan. "What happens if we do, what happens if we don't. All those things have to be considered."

Meanwhile, Peter Kepros, President of the AUNBT, which represents professors and librarians, says he's

starting to pick up rumors about the replacement of faculty members.

Kepros wonders what the cut in provincial funding means. "The process of replacing faculty may in fact be slowed down in which case it sounds to me as if we and our increased work loads are being used to cover the loss of government funding," he said.

"We've had a promise from the administration that they would begin to replace full time professors in two years," Kepros said. "If these people are not replaced work loads will continue to grow."

Kepros also expressed concern about talk that tuition fees would increase as a result of provincial government funding cuts. "Students have a tough enough time coming to university as it is."

Province called to aid in UNB contract negotiations

By Gordon Loane
Brunswickan News

The provincial government has appointed a conciliation officer in a contract dispute between UNB and its 360 member UNB Employees Association.

The government appointed conciliator Dave Moore on February 8. He has until the end of this week to prepare a report, but that can be extended with the agreement of both parties.

The conciliator met with both sides for the first time this Wednesday. Contract talks broke down in January after the employees rejected the Administration's latest offer.

Neither side is commenting on the issues in dispute, but UNB's Vice-President Finance and Administration, James O'Sullivan, said "we, and I expect they, are hopeful that the result of Conciliation will be positive."


The UNB Employees' Association represents secretaries, accountants, library assistants, clerks, security personnel, maintenance workers, snow plough operators, general labourers, Graphic Services and Audio-Visual Services workers. The employees' latest contract expired last June.

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