



NEWS RELEASE

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AU Students Applaud Affordability Framework New policy addresses many concerns, but barriers still exist

Athabasca University Students' Union – Friday's press release on the Affordability Framework for Post-Secondary education included a number of surprises and addressed many of the concerns expressed in AUSU's 2005 submission to the A Learning Alberta Steering Committee's post-secondary review.

Requests from AUSU's wish list that have been addressed by the report include:

- **Tuition rollbacks to 2004 levels with assurance that future tuition increases will be limited to the Alberta Consumer Price Index.** While 2004's tuition rates are still too high and continue to present a barrier for many students, the limit on increases was one of AUSU's most important wish list items and an important first step in addressing the affordability issues encountered by Alberta students.
- **More financial support for part-time students.** AUSU represents many adult learners who are studying part-time, and these new supports will ensure that more of our members can remain in the workforce while furthering their educations.
- **Lifetime student loan limits will be extended for students who have repaid previous loans.** Many AUSU members are returning students with prior loans who encounter funding roadblocks despite having repaid their previous debts. AUSU is excited about this change which will go a long way toward fulfilling Alberta's promise to foster lifelong learning.

One item that was not specifically requested by AUSU, which we are delighted to see in the new policy, is the requirement that universities and the government must consult with students groups – who are, after all, those most affected by the policy – before making any changes. We are excited about being among the students' groups who will work with the Advanced Education Ministry on future policy revisions.

It is clear that the Alberta government gave serious consideration to the input of students groups and stakeholders when developing their recommendations and the tuition fee policy. AUSU feels that new policy is a promising sign of things to come.

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