

ADVANCED EDUCATION

Ideas. Action. Purpose.

Advancing Opportunities for Albertans

Alberta's boom-time economy is creating a lot of jobs, but some of those jobs don't provide long-term security. Workers with a post-secondary degree, diploma or certificate will always be in demand, however, typically enjoying higher salaries and greater career potential than those who choose not to continue their education after high school.

Alberta's economy also stands to benefit from higher education levels. In fact, many companies consider a highly skilled workforce the number one factor when deciding where to locate.

Yet the province's investment in post-secondary education has been erratic at best, and more research-focused than student-focused.

Where does this leave students? Further and further behind. Universities, colleges and technical schools have tried to balance their budgets by hiking tuition while crowding more students into their classrooms. Since 1990, Alberta students have seen tuition rise faster than anywhere else in the country, up to 275 per cent (\$1286 in 1990-91 to \$4828 in 2006-2007).

While limiting tuition increases to the cost of living is a step in the right direction, tuition in Alberta is still well above the Canadian average, making a mockery of the government's promise that post-secondary education in Alberta would be the most innovative and affordable in the country. Removing tuition from legislation and putting it under regulatory control last year also means the public will have little or no say in future increases.

The bottom line — for more and more students, is that the high cost of tuition means facing years of crippling debt and, in some cases, having to forego a post-secondary education altogether.

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The centerpiece of the Alberta Liberal plan for advanced education is the creation of a Post-Secondary Endowment. The Endowment would be allotted 25 per cent of the nearly one-third of non-renewable resource revenues we would set aside each year for savings and investment. There would be no cap, allowing the investment to grow as our population and economy grows.

The goal — to build the Endowment to \$15 billion by 2020–21, generating \$790 million annually in interest alone. This is far more ambitious than the current Access to the Future Fund, which is targeted to be capped at just \$3 billion — insufficient to meet current needs, let alone the growth predicted in the next 15 to 20 years.

The Alberta Liberal Post-Secondary Endowment would guarantee stable and predictable funding to Alberta's existing universities, colleges and technical schools, allow new spaces to be created (with the priority on areas with critical shortages, such as health care), and take the pressure off tuition increases to ensure every Albertan has the opportunity to get a post-secondary education.

As well as ensuring post-secondary education is accessible and affordable, the Alberta Liberals believe the quality of our education system should be second to none. To complement longstanding government support for the health and science sectors, we would create a \$500 million endowment for the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, in recognition of the importance of these areas of study.

Want to know more? Visit www.albertaliberal.com or call us at 1-800-661-9201.

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