

THE BRUNS



NATIONAL NEWS

FROM UNIVERSITY NEWSROOMS ACROSS CANADA

BUDGET GETS MIXED REVIEWS

Education groups
upset with lack of
federal focusby Mark Greenan
Ottawa Bureau Chief

The recent federal budget may have allayed some fears about security, but many student and faculty groups feel the federal government is failing to protect post-secondary education.

Released by Finance Minister Paul Martin on Dec. 10, the budget concentrated on increasing security in the wake of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. The vast majority of new spending was directed at that area.

Even with the new spending, Martin forecasted balanced budgets in each of the next three fiscal years. He also reiterated the government's commitment to the tax cuts and health care funding announced in October 2000.

Despite the events of Sept. 11 and the economic slowdown, Martin reiterated the government's commitment to making strategic investments in skills and innovation.

"Knowledge is to the information age what steam was to the industrial age; it is the fuel which drives it; the energy which sustains it," he said. "When times are tough and people are hurting, we must provide every opportunity for Canadians to upgrade their skills."

The budget allocates a one-time investment of \$200 million to cover the indirect costs of federally sponsored research. Funding for the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC) and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) were also increased by 7 per cent — \$36.5 million and \$9.5 million respectively.

The Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC), which has lobbied for reimbursement of the indirect costs of research, was pleased with the infusion of federal money.

"Innovation has been a major part of the government's agenda," said AUCC president Robert Giroux. "But with Sept. 11, with the downturn in the economy, we weren't sure if they were going to be going ahead with it."

Student groups were not as pleased. "This budget is going to be nothing to celebrate," said Ian Boyko, national chair of the Canadian Federation of Students. "This budget does nothing to address the issue of accessibility to education."

However, Boyko did credit the government for providing further assistance to students with disabilities. Funding to cover the exceptional costs for students with disabilities through the Canada Study Grants program was significantly increased in the budget. Also, the tax credit for adults enrolled in full- and part-time post-secondary education was increased.

The Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA) also decried the lack of focus on rising tuition fees.

"It's been about four years since the

government has addressed the issue of accessibility in a major way," said Liam Arbuckle, the organization's national director, who was pleased with the government's decision to fund the indirect costs of research. "Just as the '98 budget was deemed an education budget, we need another one."

Liberal MPs in the Government Caucus on Post Secondary Education and Research acknowledged that the accessibility issue may have not been dealt with in the budget, but said they are still concerned about rising tuition fees.

"We are still greatly concerned about access to universities and to community colleges," said Peter Adams, the member

of Parliament for Peterborough and chair of the caucus.

The Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) also criticized the lack of emphasis on education in the budget.

"There's nothing for the core operating expenditures of universities. There's nothing for students," said James Turk, CAUT executive director.

Turk also criticized the lack of support in the budget for research in the social sciences and the humanities.

"SSHRC got such a small increase in funding that its going to have to cut back on some of its programs," said Turk, who noted that SSHRC is only able to provide funding to 3.5 per cent of

graduate students in the social sciences and the humanities.

The members of the government caucus said that they are aware of the challenges facing researchers in the social sciences.

"It is more difficult to articulate with the general public and with public servants the case for the social sciences and the humanities and we have really tried to do that," said Adams.

"Are we happy with the general increase? Yes. Will we continue to lobby for the social sciences and humanities? Yes," said Fredericton MP Andy Scott, a member of the PSE caucus.

Practice makes perfect...



Stephanie Brunet/The Brunswickan

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Access to education should
be universal: CASAStudent Association demands
Federal study

by Chris Connell

Statistics Canada released a report in December indicating that young adults from low-income families are 2.5 times less likely to attend university than those aged 18-21 from high-income families.

The Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA) believes that every person in Canada should have access to an education regardless of socio-economic status.

Liam Arbuckle, National Director for CASA, believes that the study doesn't go far enough. "The Government of Canada has a responsibility to find out why young people from low income families don't go to university," he claims.

CASA is demanding the Federal Government commission a study to find out why only 16% of 18-21 year olds from the lowest family income quartile go on to university.

The Government has programs in place to encourage those with the most need to attend university — the Canadian Student Loan Program (CSLP) and the Millennium Scholarship Foundation (MSF) are two programs in place to meet the needs of low income families.

"Obviously these programs are missing their mandate to increase access," said Arbuckle.

"The formulas that the CSLP uses to assess student needs are out of date and they fail to adequately fund students' real university costs."

"It's about making education accessible. The Federal government has started to take steps towards alleviating student debt. Now it's time for them to start addressing unmet financial need," said Arbuckle.

Minister Martin has since announced an Income Contingent Loan Remission program, which will help Canada's poorest students pay back their student loans.

Research funding pouring into Alberta

by Neil Darmer
Alberta Bureau Chief

Only four universities in Canada surpassed the \$200-million mark in research funding in 2000, and included near the top of the list is the University of Alberta.

Research Infosource, a research company based in Toronto, recently completed a study of research funding based partly on Statistics Canada data. Entitled Canada's Top Research Universities Report, the company published an in-depth report based on information from both 1999 and 2000 which tracked changes in sponsored research income at universities across Canada.

The report indicates that 35 per cent of Canadian university funding came from large corporations, private donations and non-profit organizations, while the remainder of funding came from both the provincial and federal government.

Granted a total of \$206 million was the

University of Alberta, which occupied fourth place in Canada's Top 50 Universities list. The University of Calgary made seventh place in the list, while the University of Lethbridge came in at 43rd. The top three universities were the University of Toronto (\$372 million), the Université de Montréal (\$253 million), and McGill University (\$234 million).

The University of Winnipeg had a record 127 per cent increase in research funding between 1999 and 2000, while nine other universities rose by at least 50 per cent. A few universities however, including the University of Prince Edward Island, reported decreased funding.

Impressively, Alberta's universities captured the top spot in research intensity, dollars per full-time faculty, in fiscal 2000. The three institutions reported per capita sponsored research income of nearly \$117,000.

"The Alberta government's commitment to increasing university

research capacity accounts for the province's strong showing," said Ron Freedman, president of Research Infosource.

"Alberta's position was also influenced by the fact that two of its three universities have medical schools and affiliated research hospitals. Research intensity for universities with medical schools and affiliated research hospitals is higher than those without a medical faculty," Freedman explained.

While the amount of research funding given to universities in the year 2001 has not yet been studied, there is already indication that the U of A might move forward from its current fourth place spot.

As of December 2001, six U of A researchers were awarded positions in the Canadian Research Chair program administered by the federal government. A collective total of \$3.9 million in research funding was also promised alongside the positions.

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