

Is Freezing Tuition the Best Thing we can do for University Students?

By Julie VEINOT

There has been a lot of talk this past week about raising and freezing tuition and all of that other stuff students with shallow pocketbooks have to worry about. While I would not complain if, all of a sudden, the government forked over enough money to freeze tuition costs for the next decade - or, as I prefer, for the next three years - I also wonder what the repercussions would be to having a tuition freeze.

Quality education requires money, no bones about it. Somehow, some way, we will pay, whether it's the day we register, the six months after we graduate, or the taxes we begin to pay once we're in the real world and working at paying jobs. The question is: is a tuition freeze the best way to go about it?

If the tuition costs are halted for four or five years, what happens when the tuition freeze is over? Chances are, the tuition is going to jump dramatically, per-

haps as much as it has at the University of Victoria, where this year costs rose an astonishing 30 per cent (though on the bright side it still only costs \$3,600).

Is it fair for someone who has a bill of \$3,000 to face one of \$3,900 within the span of one year? Wouldn't it be better to increase the cost gradually at a tuition increase of 10 per cent every three years so students can prepare for it? Think: \$3,300, \$3,600, then \$3,900. At least if the increases come a little bit over three years, no one has to suddenly give up their education, which they will have to consider if their bill jumps 30 per cent in one year.

Aside from the tuition freeze, what happens if university becomes dirt cheap and tuition is frozen? Would the professors lose out on pay, then leave so they could go to a province where the pay is better like so many physicians have done? Would thousands of students from across the country flock to this cheap university, causing over-booked classrooms where professors' attentions must be

diverted to hundreds of students in each and every class? Would students not put as much effort into their studies, knowing the costs are so minimal they could stay in school for years upon years without racking up a big debt?

Don't get me wrong. I would love to have a cheaper tuition bill.

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I would really, really love that. I can't imagine what it would be like to not pay \$10,000 a year to learn a little Plato and English.

But I also know freezing tuition is not the answer to a big problem. What is? Increasing overall funding, but again, this is a pipe dream.

Governments have no extra money, especially in a small province like Prince Edward Island that has to rely on the federal government for so much money in equalization payments. Is it fair to ask people with mysterious ailments to wait for an MRI because there is no money to properly equip hospitals, just so university students don't have to come out of college with a few hundred dollars less in debt? Especially when the average university graduate is going to make more over their lifetime than someone with just a high school education?

There is no free lunch. We all pay somehow, someway.

I wish I could propose a solution that would work other than tuition freezing, but I am certain I don't want to face one huge increase every three or four years rather than a gradual increase.

It is just not fair to those students who are coming behind us, or to those who will be in school long enough to face something like a 30 per cent jump in tuition.

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