

# THE VOICE

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## A Bug In Your Ear...

LETTER TO THE EDITOR:

*a response from the president's office to Darren Kereluk's article "In Theory, It's Your University" in The Voice on February 21, 2001.*

I am always happy to see AU students give voice to their opinions and to contribute to debate and balanced decision-making at AU. It is also a great pleasure to see AUSU operating in its primary role as advocate for AU students.

In reading your March 14 column [**ed. after restoring the archives, the article in question appears in its original issue, Feb 21, 2001**] - "In Theory, It's Your University" - I noticed a couple of factual errors that could have mislead students, and should be clarified.

First, the column contains the statement "... she has been told not to share any information about the deliberations at BAC..." This indicates the student rep to BAC was, to be blunt, muzzled. This impression is just inaccurate, Darren. Rather, Halah Alhussani was specifically encouraged to share information with Student's Council, and to solicit input and feedback. For example, during a February 14 budget-focused teleconference meeting that I understand included Dominique Abrioux, Art Nutt, Adam Heighes, Halah, and others, Dominique expressly encouraged Halah to involve others in AUSU. We certainly want to make this point perfectly clear: AU student input to budgetary issues is important and heard. I've been told Halah has been an excellent student representative and that her opinions and comments are valued and respected by other BAC members.

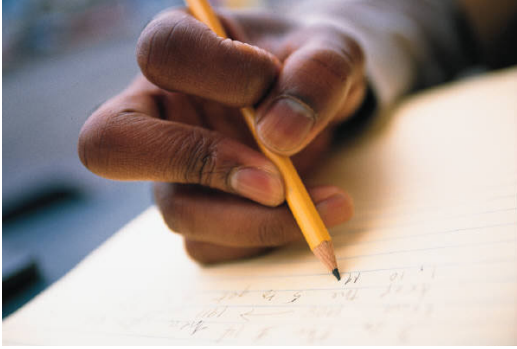
Secondly, tuition will increase 4.9%, not 8% as indicated in the column.

Some of this may be a timing issue, depending on when the column was composed. You may not know that AU made several attempts to set up a meeting with Council for earlier than February 14 in order to share information and give students a voice earlier in the budget process, but I understand these efforts were not successful.

Pam Patten

## CHANGES TO STUDENT LOAN PROGRAM REPORTED 'SEAMLESS'

By Darren Stewart, Ottawa Bureau



OTTAWA (CUP) -- Officials from Human Resources Canada report that the transition of student loans from banks to private service providers has been "seamless."

But student groups say they are worried the true test of the new service is yet to come. They also say government officials are ignoring the real issues, such as increasing student debt and prohibitive tuition costs.

Mark Kissell, national director for the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations, said the true efficiency of the system will be tested this fall, with the September rush on new student loans. "It's difficult to assess how it goes under the new program because not many of our members have had to apply for loans," said Kissell.

The HRDC officials gave an update to the standing committee on Human Resources in Parliament Tuesday on the state of the Canada Student Loan Program. Last month, the government of Canada handed over service contracts for loans to two private companies, and promised the new system would provide improved service to students in the most problematic areas. Officials say this has been successful.

"One of the primary complaints by student borrowers over the years has been limited services and in some instances students have argued they're treated as second class citizens," said HRDC spokesperson Thomas Townsend. "Through our contract with providers, our goal is to significantly improve the borrowers experience."

Townsend said he sees no reason why this goal would not be met in the coming years of loan service under the new system. "The service providers have incentives that will encourage them to do this," he said.

Michael Conlon, chair of the Canadian Federation of Students, said he was glad to hear the transition had been relatively seamless so far, but said he worried the real issues were being skirted by the federal government. He pointed out that average student debt was skyrocketing, tuition is significantly higher now than it was several years ago, and students from less privileged families were being discouraged from even applying to school because of prohibitive costs.

"It seems almost beside the point to me to talk about the problems of the Canada Student Loan Program in isolation from the larger issues," he said.

Libby Davies, NDP education critic, agreed with Conlon, saying that the government should be looking at the bigger picture of lack of funding for core university services, rather than a seamless student loan program.

"Unless we understand the financial arrangement, and not look at the student loan program in isolation from the funding arrangement, then we're really missing the boat," she said.

Davies also said she thinks it's necessary to discuss recent amendments to the Bankruptcy Act, which prohibits students from declaring bankruptcy until 10 years after graduation.

Jim Turk, executive director of the Canadian Association of University Teachers, agreed with Davies and said that the new law ought to be repealed.

"Why is it that I can get a \$50,000 loan, lose it all at the Hull Casino, then declare bankruptcy, but I can spend the same amount on a university education and not be eligible for to declare bankruptcy?" he asked.

Townsend said HRDC only monitors the use of debt management programs, such as interest relief, and have no way of gauging and reporting on the effects of the bankruptcy legislation.

"I would judge the debt management segments to be the most critical factor of the program to be monitored," he said.

According to HRDC, March and April are the slowest months for the disbursement of student loans. Townsend said the transition of the program was carried out in March to ensure that any bugs could be worked out before September.

## **Speaking My Mind**

**by Mark A.C. Gueffroy**



The community of Lac La Biche, Alberta recently suffered a tragic loss in a motor vehicle accident that was caused by an intoxicated driver. The death has resulted in our community being thrust into the darkness of mourning, and angered rage at the driver who killed five people because he refused to drink responsibly. How are you going to respond to this loss?

You have two options: you can "feel sorry" for the victims that survived the accident (families of the departed, friends, community) and then forget about their loss, or you can remember what happened to their families the next time you are intoxicated and hand your keys to a designated driver who has not consumed alcohol-or better yet, drink at home! Please also remember that even a little is too much and if you have been drinking alcohol, no matter the amount, PLEASE DON'T DRIVE-or you WILL be a bloody idiot-because you were killed or injured in a car accident or inflicted that fate upon others.

Those of you who would like to contribute to the families of the victims can contact any Northern Alberta CIBC or Alberta Treasury Branch to make your contribution. You may also contact Marlaine Steuart of the Lac La Biche RCMP-Victim Services at (780) 623-4012 for more information.

MARK GUEFFROY is a Writer/Reporter with THE VOICE and the author of the Speaking My Mind column. He may be contacted at [boylevetvol@hotmail.com](mailto:boylevetvol@hotmail.com) or by telephone at (780) 623-9488.

## Alberta students join campaign to save the Foothills

By Sarah Glen, Western Environment Writer, Environment Bureau



**EDMONTON (CUP)** -- A student-based environmental group is campaigning to protect the Alberta foothills, joining a growing chorus of criticism against a provincial government program to protect ecologically sensitive regions.

The University of Alberta's association of environment and conservation sciences has been handing out postcards addressed to Premier Ralph Klein to students across campus for the past couple of weeks.

The postcards urge the premier to table legislation that would protect the region from future development.

"Students are key in this campaign," said Jeff Manchak, president of the association. "So far, we've had pretty positive feedback."

The campaign, called Alberta Foothills: The Rescue Mission, is spearheaded by the Alberta Wilderness Association. It is a backlash against the government's Special Places 2000 initiative, which aimed to double the amount of protected areas in the province.

The wilderness association is fighting for better protection of the Foothills region because it is home to many "at risk" species, such as woodland caribou and bull trout. The region also acts as a unique ecological transitory zone between the Rocky Mountains and the prairies, said Jillian Tamblyn, a member of the wilderness association.

According to Alberta Wilderness Association president Cliff Wallis, areas protected through the Special Places 2000 initiative turned out to be insufficient. Only 1.5 per cent of the Foothills Region was protected.

"Under the Special Places legislation, any pre-existing development was allowed to continue - whether that be mining, logging or drilling," said Tamblyn. "We find that to be totally unacceptable."

The campaign is focusing on educating the public about the lack of protection for the region while promoting consumer awareness, said Tamblyn.

With over 70 per cent of Alberta's natural exports travelling to the United States, the Alberta Wilderness Association is concentrating their efforts on U.S. corporations that buy Alberta's oil, wood or ore.

"There is a major consumer reaction against companies that buy products from endangered regions right now. We are trying to get the message out that some of Alberta's exports are still coming from these ecologically sensitive regions and that has got to change," said Tamblyn.

Kathy Telfer, spokesperson for Environment Alberta, the government's environmental ministry and one of the Special Places 2000 organizers, calls the Alberta Wilderness Association's action "unnecessary".

"We have achieved what we set out to do," Telfer said. "Of course, you are never going to make everyone happy."

She notes that over the five-year-long initiative, the government protected 75 new areas across the province and expanded 13 new sites. The program ran from 1995 to the end of last year.

And while she agrees that the Foothills region is an important area of the province that needs to be protected, Telfer said the initiative's move to protect just over one per cent of the region is progress.

"We have protected a diverse set of lands across the province, while taking industry and community concerns into account. It's not easy," she said.

Home Depot is one corporation that has bowed to consumer pressure and no longer buys wood from endangered lands.

Tamblyn said that unless the Foothills region is protected, Alberta will not remain competitive in the international market for long.

## **Enlightening Information**



### **Convocation June 2001**

In order to graduate on June 08<sup>th</sup> from the graduate programs and June 09<sup>th</sup> from the undergraduate programs, the following conditions must be met: Students must apply to graduate no later than April 16, 2001. The Application for Graduation form is available at the Learning Centres, AU Central, and on the web.

All final grades, including grades for courses completed through other institutions on Letters of Permission, must be received by the Office of the Registrar no later than May 07, 2001.

## **KATIMAVIK, A YOUTH PROGRAM IN 3D**

### **IT'S TIME TO APPLY!**

Montreal, February 7, 2001 - KATIMAVIK, Canada's leading national youth service program, has been a huge success for 20,593 young Canadians since 1977. Today, more than ever, KATIMAVIK answers the needs of youth. For seven months, KATIMAVIK offers young men and women aged 17 to 21 hailing from all across Canada a chance to live in a group of 11 people with a project leader who supervises their learning and ensures that their program goes smoothly. The KATIMAVIK program is free.

## 1. **KATIMAVIK : a complete training process!**

Participants get involved in community life in three provinces and/or territories, where they obtain all sorts of experience by working as volunteers. Participants in KATIMAVIK also gain ongoing training in five areas: second language, leadership, environment, culture and lifestyle.

The KATIMAVIK experience helps its young participants develop their leadership skills, accomplish projects, take part in activities, tackle challenges, learn more about themselves, realize a dream and find their future direction. The result of a survey conducted by the KPMG consultancy revealed that: 90% of those who completed the program are now either working or have returned to their studies. KATIMAVIK is all that and much more!

## 2. **KATIMAVIK: learning through emotional intelligence...**

According to a survey conducted among former participants by KPMG:

- *87% believe their KATIMAVIK experience taught them how to work as part of a team.*
- *85% believe they now have leadership skills.*
- *85% feel they are very able to solve conflicts, compared with 22% before the program.*

## 3. **KATIMAVIK means "take action"!**

KATIMAVIK also means seeing your country, changing your life and surroundings and associating with other young people who want to explore new horizons and see what's happening elsewhere.

### ***IT'S TIME TO APPLY...***

Young men and women aged 17 to 21 can apply until April 27, 2001, by calling 1 888 525-1503 (toll-free) or visiting our Web site at [www.katimavik.org](http://www.katimavik.org). According to the KPMG survey, 94% of former participants would recommend the KATIMAVIK program to their friends.

KATIMAVIK takes participants on a life journey!

Only 726 openings!

The Government of Canada, through Exchanges Canada, part of the Department of Canadian Heritage, is proud to provide financial assistance to KATIMAVIK.

## **Advise the PM, Win Cash Too!**



Magna Scholarship Contest Offers Cash Prizes and Internships

Canadian auto parts manufacturer, Magna International Inc., is inviting Canadian students to participate in its 7th annual "As Prime Minister" scholarship competition. Open to full-time students currently enrolled in undergraduate or graduate studies at an accredited college, university or CEGEP, the contest asks participants to submit a 2500-word essay responding to the question: "If you were the Prime Minister of Canada, what political vision would you offer to improve our living standards?"

Winning submissions will be selected on the basis of practical, solution-driven and innovative proposals that demonstrate defensible, realistic visions for a stronger Canada.

Fifty semi-finalists will be flown to Toronto to present their essays to a panel of judges. The 10 best entries will then go on to the finals, to be announced at an awards dinner in Ottawa in

November. All 50 semi-finalists will receive a \$500 award and a certificate recognizing their participation in the program, while the 10 finalists will receive \$10,000 and a four-month internship at Magna International, valued at \$12,000. The national winner will receive an additional \$10,000 and a one-year internship at Magna, valued at \$36,000.

While in Ottawa, finalists will formally submit their essays and be on hand while a complete summary of the 2001 As Prime Minister awards is presented to the Prime Minister and Canadian government. All program finalists will also be featured in the book @stake, "As Prime Minister I would." and be invited to take part in the national launch which will involve an opportunity for debate and discussion with the finalists and national winner. For more information, check out the As Prime Minister Awards Program website at [www.asprimeminister.com](http://www.asprimeminister.com). Entries are due by June 4th, 2001. Good luck and good writing!

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### **GOT PROBLEMS? NEED ADVICE?**

#### LOOKING FOR AN HONEST OPINION?

Send your comment, question, or concern to The Voice's Advice Columnist at [advice75@hotmail.com](mailto:advice75@hotmail.com)

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### **WRITE FOR THE VOICE!**

Fill on our online application at [www.ausu.org/voice/write.html](http://www.ausu.org/voice/write.html) or contact Tammy Moore at 1-800-788-9041 ext 2905 on Fridays between 8:30 and 4:30 MST. You can also email [voice@ausu.org](mailto:voice@ausu.org) or contact Tammy Moore at 1-800-788-9041 ext 2905 on Fridays.