

# THE VOICE

## MAGAZINE

*Volume 15 Issue 11*  
*March 30, 2007*



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***A Student of the World***

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*A classroom in the palm of your hand*

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# THE VOICE MAGAZINE

March 30, 2007 - Volume 15, Issue 11

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### *To AU Students*

Microsoft Office 2007 will be officially released by Microsoft January 31, 2007, and has been available for download from Microsoft for a while.

While AU staff will eventually be using Office 2007, a full conversion to this software is several months away. An announcement will be posted when the conversion is complete. Until then, documents sent to AU staff should be saved as Office 2003 format. Save your documents as follows:

Word/Excel/PowerPoint 2007 - Create your document and immediately click on the Office start button (upper left hand corner), Save as and choose Word/Excel/ PowerPoint 97-2003 compatibility. The title bar will reflect the document is in the compatibility mode. The help files in the 2007 software (search for compatibility) explain this feature in detail.

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### *AU Computing Services Helpdesk*

## THE VOICE MAGAZINE

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# Party Time In Paris

by Tanja Ahlin

When the year starts coming to its end, people start partying. Or at least that happens in Slovenia, where I come from. The shop windows change their outfits beginning in November and everything sparkles in that Christmas-y red and green, so the whole capital, Ljubljana, reminds me of a field of poppies. And then Merry December suddenly strikes. There are concerts, parties, and business dinners everywhere you look. By the Ljubljanica River, winding right through the city's centre, small wooden stalls with all kinds of gifts spring, and at some of them you can treat yourself to a cup of hot wine. So after dinner with your family, you hurry there and you can be sure to meet someone you know, even if you haven't arranged any *rendez-vous* in advance, or meet some new people. In this kind of atmosphere you really get the feeling that New Year's holidays are not just about boosting the national economy, but about relationships, about family and friends, and about having a good time.

So you can imagine I looked forward to spending my New Year's holidays in Paris, a much larger capital with so many more possibilities to enjoy yourself and the people you might meet. It all started quite typically: in late November, *marchés de Noël* (or Christmas fairs) flourished, at least one in every town. There were a couple of them in Dijon, where my boyfriend and I went to pay a visit to a friend who was also spending her semester as an exchange student. On our weekend journey to Dieppe in Normandy the lifeless landscape of empty fields was enlivened by a sign for a fair every couple of miles. Along with the fair always came a carousel and sometimes even a small skating rink. One of these appeared right in front of the *Hôtel de Ville*, the town hall in the middle of Paris. It was not only fun, but also very convenient, because all the big shopping centres are right around the corner. Plus, you could guess what the most popular gifts would be this year according to the logotypes on the shopping bags people were carrying.



Maybe I had bad luck, since the Samaritane centre was (and still is) closed for renovation and so I was deprived of the most famous shop-window glitter. But hey, I thought, if there is a lot of anything in Paris it is shops, and I was convinced I would find them dazzling. That, however, did not happen: their windows remained dark and gloomy just like the sky above the city. To make things even worse, all the fairs mysteriously disappeared right after December 25. How could that be? And even though there were thousands of posters all around the city which invited people to discover *Paris Illuminé Paris*, the only street I could see bright at night was the avenue Champs-Élysées. A continuous river of people paraded by the closed, dull shops only to see that the lights on the box-shaped trees were lit and all was in order. No food-and-



drink stalls to warm yourself, no gifts to buy, no friends to meet. Poor Parisians, I thought, they get to go down this road every year.

The atmosphere was therefore virtually forcing you to resort to food—and we did. There was a lot of it, all kinds, too, but not everywhere or at every hour. There is a *boulangier* (a baker's shop) on every corner

and, accordingly, there is one on the corner of my street. It takes about three minutes to get out of bed and fetch a warm *baguette* and *pain au chocolat* for breakfast. They usually sell pastries as well. My boyfriend is crazy about the soft, chocolate- or caramel-filled stick-like *éclair*, but I fell for the raspberry *tartelette*, a pie which reminds me of a ruby and is exactly as good as it looks. Especially for Christmas, the French prepare *bûche de Noël*, which literally means “Christmas log.” This chocolate or fruit or chestnut cake indeed reminds one of a log, but you would not want to throw it into the fireplace. Not to mention *galette du rois*, a special pie the French eat on the second Sunday after Christmas. It is made of flaky pastry and fruits and each of them contains a small, usually plastic, figurine. The one who gets it in his or her piece becomes a king or a queen for the day. This tradition is in fact the origin of the king cake in the United States during the Carnival season.



Since my mother was paying a visit, we longed for something famously French. So we decided on a special late lunch. But in France you can eat what you want only when the time is right. From 3 p.m. to 6 p.m., every decent restaurant in Paris is closed. Still, although we grumbled about it, our swapping late lunch for dinner paid off. We found a true fondue restaurant in the popular rue Moufflard in the Latin Quarter. There I discovered not only the charm of the melting cheese in a pot above fire, but also the tasty meat fondue. In this case you fork pieces of beef or duck and let them roast in a sprinkling of oil. Best of all, however, I loved the fresh fruit in hot dark chocolate.



Paris, in the end, turned out to have quite a different New Year’s atmosphere from what I expected. We haven’t been to any nightclubs, so I couldn’t really say this is not a city in which to have fun in that way. But we did try to find a place to listen to the French *chansons*. Unfortunately, our quest turned out to be unsuccessful. It seems the smoke-filled bars where you could have a drink by the sound of an accordion and songs of *amour* in the fashion of Edith Piaf have gone with the winds of change.



The French capital is, however, definitely the best place to party on some other occasions. At the end of January, CGT (*Confédération Générale du Travail*, the major French workers trade union) organized a protest in the name of who-knows-what (indeed, some people I talked with went demonstrating without having any idea what it was really about) at Place d’Italy which is close to where I live. I know that protests are a uniquely French phenomenon and I have already felt its effects every couple of weeks when the metro did not show up when it was supposed to. But what struck me this time was the theme from *Batman* spreading down the avenues along with the smell of hot dogs and the colourful balloons floating in the clear blue sky. On the wide roundabout,

which the demonstrators seized for their purposes, there were all the ingredients of a perfect party: booze, barbecues, party flags, crackers, and even a live concert performed by a Mexican group. Who said the French don’t know how to swing and swirl? If you mixed up the dates and occasions, the shame is on you.

# Rant Alert!

by Hazel Anaka



*From  
Where  
I Sit*

Hazel Anaka

Rant alert! Rant alert! Am I alone in believing that basic customer service is going to hell in a hand basket? Didn't think so.

It doesn't seem to matter if the purchase costs a few dollars or thousands of dollars. It doesn't matter if the business is a corner store, big box store, e-commerce website, multinational corporation, franchise, chain, or is home based. It doesn't matter if it is goods or service based.

I'm mad as hell and I'm not going to take it anymore. I'm sick of retailers taking me and my dollars for granted. I'm fed up with incompetent, uninterested, indifferent employees (or sometimes even owners). I'm angry that it often takes several phone calls, e-mails, or return trips to get something remotely like customer satisfaction. I'm sick of telephone menus—press one for service in English (what, no Swahili?); press two for blah, blah; press three for yadda, yadda—and voice mail. "If you know the extension of the person you're calling, please enter it now. To hear the company directory, please press . . ." When you finally get to a real live human being, a recording warns that the call may be monitored to improve customer service. If only.

Oh Lord, spare me the broken promises, the lip service, the rhetoric, the catchy slogans, the mission statements. Just give me a human being who gives a damn.

Doesn't every self-respecting business owner know that it takes on average six times as much effort to attract a new customer as it does to keep an old customer happy? I'm not sure of the exact numbers but I do

know dissatisfied customers tell many, many more people than do happy ones. That's why word of mouth is potentially a business's great marketing tool or the proverbial kiss of death.

Speaking of the kiss of death—I was directed recently to a website entitled [www.ripoffreport.com](http://www.ripoffreport.com). It seems to be a wide-open forum for people with legitimate customer complaints to get the air time they need. It also offers targeted companies the opportunity to rebut claims and for letters of support to get equal time. Apparently there are safeguards in place to prevent malicious, libellous attacks from competitors and/or disgruntled employees. I haven't yet posted a report about a particular company I have a beef with, because I'm hoping they respond favourably with the refund I'm requesting based solely on the very compelling letter I wrote (and the implied threat that Rip-Off Report is the next step).

What a shame that so much time and energy is being expended just trying to protect our consumer dollars. What a shame that some companies still don't get it. They haven't figured out the real dollar cost of ill will, bad press, lost opportunities and employee time. We can't blame all the lousy service on Alberta's overheated economy. It existed before the boom; it existed beyond our borders; it's rampant.

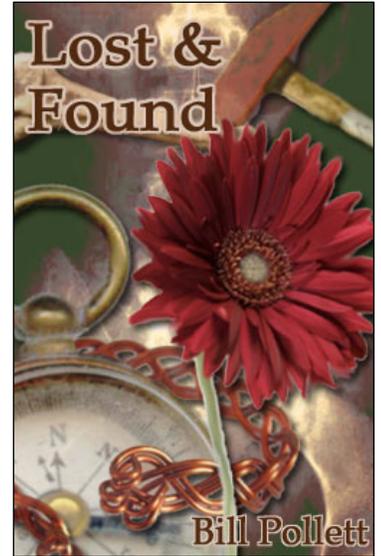
I'm mad as hell and I'm not taking it anymore. It's self-defence, from where I sit.

# Lost & Found

by Bill Pollett

## The Ocean Calling

In the middle of the night, my cell phone began to ring. Half asleep and afraid someone close to me had died (the ominous shadow behind every late-night call) I stumbled downstairs and retrieved it with fumbling hands from my jacket pocket. On the other end of the line, there was a vast crackling and hissing. It was the ocean calling, to remind me of my forgotten home. Its immense, distant song was filled with the voices of mermaids and drowned sailors, lunar rhythms and lost wrecks.



Next morning, when I turned on my computer with shaking hands, I found the aurora borealis burning behind the glass screen. It threw green-tinged flickering ghosts across my walls and ceiling, ice age shadow puppets to remind me of the great emptiness of space beyond my living room lights, all the darkness before and after the brief sparkler light of human existence.

At lunch hour, when I ate my tuna fish on rye sitting on a bench in the park, dark green vines wrapped themselves around my ankles, twisted themselves up my legs. The overhanging branches of trees reached down and curled around my throat. "Feel the ancient green throbbing of our life," they seemed to say, "and remember how small and weak and brief your life truly is."

Walking back to the office, carbon-black clouds followed above me like a pod of great demonic whales. They unleashed a plague of frozen rain upon my head, burned my heels with jagged bolts of lightning so that my shoes smoked and melted to my feet. The wind screamed its pent-up anger in my face, threatening to tear the tissue-soft flesh from my brittle bones.

When I got in the elevator, a bitter cold ocean wave (it must have stealthily followed me home) slipped in just before the doors had time to close. I filled up the lift from floor to ceiling, and when the doors finally opened, I was swept out onto the carpet, half-drowned and gasping for air.

The reception area of the office smelled of sickly sweet jungle flowers, of death and decay. At the desks where my co-workers once sat, there were only corpses, being stripped clean by insects and birds. The walls were covered with mould, and ominous tangled vines hung from the fluorescent lighting. Black, poisonous-looking toads croaked inside the water cooler. The glass of the windows was scattered across the floor like the remnants of a prairie hailstorm. Outside, the sky was flashing red and white. Somewhere beneath the booming of the thunder, I could hear the ocean, still calling and calling my name.



# Journeys

by Brian McIntyre

## *Getting Educated While Travelling the World*

Flexibility has always been an issue for me. I am a free spirit who likes to break through the cage when I feel so inclined. Trouble arose when it was necessary for me to get a degree to enable myself to continue as an English teacher in Asia.

Over dinner in South Korea, a Canadian friend of mine proposed the idea of becoming an Athabasca University student, a concept that was foreign to me. An education offered online? This all seemed perfect for my lifestyle and it turned out to be true!

Two-and-a-half years and seven countries later, I had completed my bachelor of arts in Management and had started running my own business online and in the “real” world.

Reflecting on the experience with AU has given me a new-found appreciation for what is possible in life when we are determined to believe in ourselves and devote our passion to a direction that betters ourselves. I find most of the difficulty arises with the balance of Eastern philosophy and Western economy. In other words, being able to live in the Western world while not being consumed by material desires and demands.

AU gave me the freedom to accept some Western responsibility while travelling where my heart wanted to be. Oftentimes in my past I had found the Canadian education system to be restrictive and I was constantly torn between the expected and the desired paths; a push against a force that was stronger than me. After completing two diplomas in community college I had practically burst at the seams from study overload and decided to travel the world. Four years later, the education system would catch up to me again when I was required to obtain my degree from AU.

How would I follow my dreams of travelling the globe and still pursue a higher education? AU was there.

The freedom to roam with textbook in hand was a liberating combination of education and travel. Days were spent living among the people of Asia, experiencing the sights and sounds of a world I had previously known in other lives yet hadn't experienced in this. I would take my notes to a restaurant or café and prepare for a session of studying. The locals would stand near to look over my shoulder, searching for a word that would jump out as familiar to them. They would stare at the papers for what seemed an eternity, and I would take moments out to ponder what must be going on in their minds. “The writing looks so foreign”; “I wonder if it is English”; “Why is he reading that in my restaurant?” were some of the thoughts I had.

Nights were spent under some odd lighting arrangements or by candlelight. I remember lying in my hammock on the porch of a bamboo hut, while the ocean spray would dampen my text and I would think to myself, “If this is university, then this is something I can handle!” The hours would creep on and the world within the pages of the text would become other-worldly,

like a distant memory of a world I had left behind but was still connected to through the subject on the pages.

Flights were another perfect time for studying. This afforded dedicated periods of time, ranging from six to 13 hours at a stretch, where the occupants of the vessel would kill time by watching movies, reading papers, sleeping, or strolling the aisles when the fasten seatbelt sign was off. For me it was a refuge from the intensity of travel; a refuge from the locals watching, from the distraction of the surroundings trying to take you away from studying. There in the plane it was a time of solace and the ability to escape. What else was I to do but study? The more studying I could do on the plane, the more time I could use to see the sights and experience the sounds at the next destination.

Delving into a textbook often meant delving into the mentality of the Western world, of government organizations and the to-do list of an international manager. But as the eyes left the page it was as though a veil of secrecy had been lifted.

There I was in Asia, living the life that was vaguely explained within the textbook, seeing the way people lived, which gave me the practical experience to understand the written word.

Standing with textbook in hand, open to the pages of the trials and tribulations of the 1997 Asian Crisis, the collapse of markets, and the ensuing struggle to repay debts, I was actually there in the affected country. I was able to look into the faces of the people there, to see the light and love of those that seemed to have so little. I paused and it hit me. The pages spoke of numbers and legalities but now I was seeing the effect on the actual people.

AU was freedom to me. I was able to accept the responsibility of education while embracing the real-world dynamics.

Eastern plains meet Western thought. The ultimate education.



## Education and Technology: It's as easy as learning your DEMs

First it was the ABCs. Then there were the three Rs. Now, students have another set of letters to add to their repertoire—DEM.

As students at Athabasca University, we're all familiar with the first one: D stands for distance education (or d-learning). The second letter stands for e-learning, the use of electronic tools to enhance teaching, such as computers, CD-ROMs, and satellite broadcasts.

And the M? That stands for mobile learning (or m-learning), a recent addition to the education milieu and one that includes the use of such portable everyday items as cell phones and PDAs.

A recent AU pilot project tested the effectiveness of learning via wireless mobile tools, and AU's *The Insider* spoke to Tony Tin, co-ordinator of the university's Mobile Learning Project.

"M-learning is a sibling to e-learning," Tony said. "Studying via computer is now very common here, but in some parts of the world there is already a great deal of mobile learning happening, and there is great potential for this in Canada" (1).

Students took part in the study at the Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers and at Calgary's Global Community College. ESL lessons were incorporated into the test project, and groups of international students used the text messaging feature on their cell phones to access lessons.

As *The Insider* notes, cell phones and PDAs are portable and reasonably inexpensive, and "a student with a \$50 cell phone could easily study while commuting" (1).

So will m-learning become the primary classroom of the future? Probably not, but it does have the potential to become a valuable resource in expanding students' access to education.

Not only can it be used by students as they travel to and from school or work, it can also become a bridge in reaching "disaffected learners" (2), those students who may not have met with success in traditional classroom settings.

Combined with the proven success of learning strategies such as distance education and electronic resources, m-learning may just take things one step further—allowing today's students to quite literally hold their future in the palm of their hands.

(1) Athabasca University. "Have Phone, Will Study." *The Insider*. March 16, 2007.

(2) Tribal CTAD. *Knowledge Centre*. Retrieved March 29, 2007, from <http://www.m-learning.org/knowledge-centre/knowledge-centre.htm>



## Music To Eat Lunch To

by Mandy Gardner

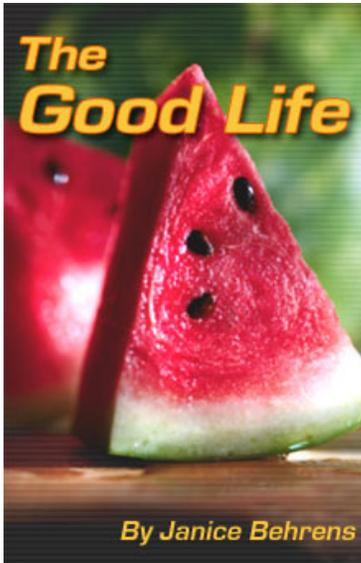
**Killswitch Engage:** As Daylight Dies  
**Release Date:** November 2006  
**Label:** Roadrunner Records  
**Tracks:** 11  
**Rating:** 7

This hardcore metal band is a five-piece group from Massachusetts and this album, *As Daylight Dies*, marks their third release from Roadrunner Records in five years. The record has proven a big success both at home and in Europe as the band embarks on an all-American tour (including Vancouver on March 28), and they can expect to hit packed stadiums at every stop. So what is the band about? In a word, hardcore. Howard Jones offers up a very versatile voice layered on top of powerful guitar and bass; what sounds at first like an entirely typical metal record is definitely benefited by the vocals.

Killswitch Engage have enjoyed an incredibly positive reception in the U.K. and the rest of Europe following the release of *As Daylight Dies*, with the singles getting huge airplay on video stations' call-in request shows. I know from having been in England in the last few months that the band is a favourite with hardcore Brits. Having broken into the European airwaves with this album means that Killswitch Engage have expanded their fan base crucially, although sales of the album in the U.S. have yet to pass half of what the band's last record, *The End of Heartache*, achieved. With the latter being arguably the band's big break out album, *As Daylight Dies* had a lot to live up to and it's fair to say that Killswitch Engage couldn't have expected to make the same numbers.

Regardless of sales numbers at the moment, this album offers up a strong set of tracks that are entirely able to stand alone as well as work their part in the record. Instead of falling into the genre trap like so many metal bands do, Killswitch Engage has kept up its own twist on the hardcore sound and each band member has an integral part to play in the final composition and performance. The overall feel of the album is not negative or grating, as many bands in this field can be, but instead quite melodic and laced with harmonies and quietly delivered lyrics. If you are a Killswitch Engage fan already, this album is a great investment. If not, you might want to pick it up and give it a try anyway. What harm can come of trying out something a bit exotic? You might be, as guitarist Adam Dutkiewicz puts it on the Killswitch Engage official MySpace web page, one of the band's "caped metal minions" (1) in waiting.

(1) Dutkiewicz, A. (2007). Greetings, My Caped Metal Minions! Retrieved March 29, 2007, from <http://blog.myspace.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=blog.view&friendID=4246250&blogID=233687585&MyToken=2e7d3dc1-1901-43fb-8226-30411d70a0f1>



# The Good Life

by Janice Behrens

## No More Wasted Days

*The most wasted of all days is one without laughter -*  
e e cummings

One of the most life-affirming experiences I have had recently came courtesy of a woman who has survived some of the most traumatic experiences a human being can live through. When she was twelve years old, this First Nations woman, a friend of a friend, was sent to a British Columbia residential school. Although she did not experience the sexual assault or extremes of physical punishment that are a common theme of so many residential school stories, it was nonetheless a harsh and painful experience. At this institution she suffered routine corporal punishment and public humiliation for breaking a bewildering set of rules she could not fully comprehend. Even worse, she was deprived of her community, her language, her culture, her dignity, and her family.

Driving home after meeting her, I was troubled by thoughts of what life would have been like if I had had the support systems and caring people who meant so much to me as I was growing up taken away from me. Who would I be today without the love and wisdom of my grandparents, or the safe, comforting protection of my mother and father? Would I have been strong enough to survive this loss, to go on and thrive in the belief that the world and the people in it are essentially good? I hope I would, but it is a difficult question to answer.

What struck me most about this woman, though, was not the fact that she had survived this ordeal, or even that she had survived it with her dignity, thoughtfulness, and positive outlook intact, although she clearly had. What filled me with admiration and hope is the fact that she survived it with a profound and joyful sense of humour. While not shying away from recounting some of the harsher realities of the school, her stories were filled with funny anecdotes about practical jokes and the sorts of minor but hilarious follies associated with growing up, no matter where you live. All through this encounter, I couldn't help, also, but reflect on some of the far more minor trials and tribulations experienced in my own life, and it gave me the determination to face whatever twists and turns of fate lie before me with the most powerful shield we have against the darkness of the world: laughter.

# The Chronicles of Cruiscin Lan

by  
Wanda  
Waterman  
St. Louis

I thing maybe I go back to Cuba. Myself I am not accustom to such extreme privation and want. Besides, ze Maritime women, zey all too smart for my own good.



Cherchez  
L'homme

Chronicles of  
CRUISCIN LAN

Well, the Mexican workers are all set to join the Maritimes. It won't be long before I'll be known as "Che Minstrel". It's a good thing I'm humble because otherwise all the praise and adulation might swell my pretty head.



Dyoods! The MEXICANS are coming?!  
Whoa-ho!  
Let's get this party started!!!  
We be JAMMIN'!!



(Sniff!!) All I'm asking for is ONE adult male with something more than chowder between his ears!  
ONE!!!



# International News Desk

by Mandy Gardner



## British Sailors Have Been Detained by Iran

Fifteen British Navy personnel have been detained by Iran this week after admitting to entering Iranian waters illegally. The detainees were escorted from their ship at gunpoint and have been held in Iran since the incident, although British Prime Minister Tony Blair insists that the 14 men and one woman (who is being held separately from her colleagues) were in fact not even in Iranian waters. It remains unclear what exactly must be achieved or ascertained in order for the soldiers to be returned home; Blair has said that his main focus at the

moment is to convince the Iranian government that this was not a hostile move and that the detainees must be returned home. If this is not achieved, he says, his focus will move into a "different phase" (1). Speculation on the meaning of this phrase has erupted throughout the world as onlookers wonder whether this incident will escalate into violence.

Despite Blair's statement, video footage has been released of the female captive explaining that her and her counterparts had "obviously . . . trespassed" (2). Footage was also released of several of the male detainees eating a meal. While no specific guarantees have been made on their behalf, the public was told that the British female would be sent home within a day of Wednesday's footage.

Iran has been under close scrutiny by the British and Americans since its recent refusal to stop nuclear development. Worries have been expressed by both countries that Iran intends not just to create nuclear power but to build up its own nuclear weapons capability. With the American military endeavours in the Middle East of late, the global community has been watching the situation in Iran tentatively and wondering more often than not "when" as opposed to "if" there will be a military encounter in Iran. If the situation with the British detainees fails to be resolved quickly and peacefully, the decision will effectively fall onto Blair's shoulders as the right-hand man of George W. Bush.

- (1) CBC News (March 27, 2007). "Blair says clash with Iran may move to 'different phase' if diplomacy fails." Retrieved March 29, 2007, from <http://www.cbc.ca/cp/world/070327/w032711A.html>
- (2) CBC News (March 28, 2007). "Iran urges Britain to admit 'mistake' over sailors' position." Retrieved March 29, 2007, from <http://www.cbc.ca/world/story/2007/03/28/britain-iran.html>

# Media Release

MARCH 21, 2007

## CONSERVATIVE BUDGET FORGETS STUDENTS: NDP

### 9 million adult learners also forgotten in the "budget for everyone"

OTTAWA - At a time of skyrocketing tuition fees and student debt, as well as chronic underfunding for adult literacy programs, the Conservative plan to build a "knowledge advantage" for Canada takes one small step forward and two steps back, said NDP Post-Secondary Education Critic Denise Savoie (Victoria).

"With over one million students in Canada, this budget directly affects only one thousand," said Savoie. "There's more money to attract students from other countries than to increase access for prospective Canadian college, apprenticeship, undergraduate, medical or law students combined."

Savoie dismissed the minor tweaks to the RESP system, which offer no benefit for parents who cannot afford to save, or who can make only modest contributions.

"We have \$40 million for high-income parents of young children, and \$0 for low and middle-income students and families who have to pay tuition this September," said Savoie. "We're unfairly asking many parents to choose between feeding or educating their kids."

To make matters worse, students were explicitly excluded from the Working Income Tax Benefit, even though hundreds of thousands of students have to work full-time to afford their tuition fees and lower their eventual student debt.

"There is no plan for student debt, no plan to ensure that the expiring Millennium Scholarship funding remains in the system as needs-based student grants, and no plan to make education more affordable for low- and middle-income families," said Savoie.

Finally, Savoie pointed to the omission of adult literacy funding in the budget, except for plans to download that responsibility fully to the provinces.

"Adult literacy funding was inadequate under the Liberals, and it is being gutted by the Conservatives," said Savoie. "If we want an equitable and competitive economy, we need federal leadership on literacy, not abandonment."

# classifieds

Classifieds are free for AU students! Contact [voice@ausu.org](mailto:voice@ausu.org) for more information.

## THE VOICE

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