



## Media Release

### **Alberta's post-secondary students unite to send clear message to the province: you can't keep cutting classes**

ALBERTA – With the 2025 Alberta budget set to be announced later this month, the overwhelming majority of Alberta's post-secondary institutions' student associations have teamed up to send one simple message to the Government of Alberta – stop cutting classes.

Student leaders at 25 of Alberta's universities and colleges are signing off on a joint open letter campaign to sound the alarm that budget cuts, which began in 2019, have left Alberta's future in jeopardy. These cuts are one of the many reasons that Alberta has dropped to being Canada's sixth-most educated province, and Alberta's workforce could see dramatic repercussions within the next few years.

60% of bachelor's students in Alberta are expected to graduate with at least \$25,000 worth of debt, and that same number rings true for about 1/3 of college students as well. This is one of the major factors at play in why so many students are leaving Alberta, reducing the number of skilled residents entering the workforce.

"Students are sending a clear message that enough is enough by packing up and leaving this province, which is a recurring trend among similarly funded sectors like healthcare and children's education," said University of Calgary's Students' Union President Ermia Rezaei-Afsah. "The quality of Alberta's post-secondary education keeps declining, and at this point it's hard not to feel that this is by design."

This sentiment is echoed by Lily Schaerer, Chair of the Alberta Students Executive Council (ASEC), which represents 15 of Alberta's colleges, polytechnics, and universities.

"Alberta historically has been a leader in education, and that is why the Alberta economy has set the standard within Canada for decades. However, with post-secondary funding receiving annual cuts since 2019, it is time to sound the alarm that Alberta's economic future is being put at risk," said Schaerer.

Between the membership of ASEC, as well as the individual signatory undergraduate and graduate unions, 290,000 of Alberta's students are calling for desperately needed funding to be allotted in this year's budget. Those student numbers represent 6% of Alberta's total population.

"The Alberta government loves to point to their 2% annual cap on tuition increases since 2023, but when nearly every university and trade school in the province is underfunded, the message sent is that students and institutions are on our own," said Lisa Glock, president of the University of Alberta Students' Union. "This kind of short-sighted behaviour is going to destroy the Alberta Advantage that we've been told so much about but have never had the chance to experience."

Many students' associations already submitted their requests for what they want to see in the budget over the past six months, but now this letter is making it clear where they all agree – Alberta cannot afford to keep cutting classes. With the province set to announce its budget in the coming weeks, time will tell if this government recognizes the importance of prioritizing its future.



**Media inquiries may be directed to:**

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**Interview availability on February 11. Please note that all potential interviewees are available from 10:30 a.m. – 4 p.m. except where noted**

**Calgary**

Ermia Rezaei-Afsah, President, University of Calgary Students' Union

Tala Abu Hayyaneh, President, Students' Association of Mount Royal University

Ahmad Baker, President, Southern Alberta Institute of Technology Students' Association

Hunter Yaworski, Vice President External, University of Calgary Graduate Students' Association

**Edmonton**

Lisa Glock, President, University of Alberta's Students' Union

Haseeb Arshad, President, University of Alberta's Graduate Students' Association, **available from 10:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.**

**Lethbridge**

Maleeka Thomas, President, University of Lethbridge Students' Union

**Urban Colleges & Rural Alberta**

Lily Schaerer, Chair, Alberta Students' Executive Council AND President, Students' Association of Medicine Hat College, **available from 10:30 a.m. – 3 p.m.**