

September 19th, 2011

To: Policy Committee

Re: VPX Report to Policy

Progressive Conservative Leadership Debates

I attended two Progressive Conservative Leadership Debates in the last two weeks. The first was a CBC radio show called "The Tories at 40", on Friday September 9th. I asked all six candidates the following questions: "This week we are welcoming about 6000 new students on our Campus who were able to predict the cost of postsecondary education thanks to the 2004 freeze on tuition and then capping tuition to CPI after that. Question to all the candidates: will the CPI cap on tuition remain during your time as Premier?" The answers were varied across the spectrum. Rick Orman (no longer in the leadership race as of Saturday) said that he won't commit to an answer. Doug Griffith (no longer in the leadership race either) stated that it would absolutely not remain. Gary Mar (1st place on the first ballot) said "without hesitation the answer is yes I would maintain the tuition cap." As well as he stated that he would remove the parental contribution as a requirement for eligibility from the Student Financial Assistance. Doug Horner (third place on the first ballot) said that keeping the CPI cap is entirely doable, and that he maintained it when he was Minister of Advanced Education and Technology and that "the CPI cap should stay". Alison Redford (2nd place on the first ballot) agreed that the cap should remain and that we would have to deal with fees. Ted Morton (no longer in the leadership race) did not answer the question. You can find the video for the CBC debate here: <http://www.cbc.ca/alberta/features/tories40/audio.html>. I also attended another debate on Thursday September 15th organized by the party.

Statistics Canada "University tuition fees" Report

StatCan released a report on Friday September 26, 2011 on average University tuition fees across the country. It can be found here: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/110916/dq110916b-eng.htm>. The report found that "Canadian full-time students in undergraduate programs paid 4.3% more on average in tuition fees for the 2011/2012 academic year this fall than they did a year earlier. This follows a 4.0% increase in 2010/2011." The Consumer Price Index (CPI) was 2.7% between July 2010 and July 2011.

Alberta has the fourth highest tuition out of all the provinces on average it is \$5,662 which is nearing Nova Scotia (3rd highest) at \$5,731 and New Brunswick (2nd highest) at \$5,853. Mandatory Non-Instructional Fees are not included in those price tags.

What was the most interesting in this report was the fact that Alberta pays the most compulsory fees (a.k.a Non-Instructional) out of all the provinces. Leading the country with \$1,133 average on Mandatory Non-Instructional Fees, this goes on to show the desperate need to regulate non-instructional fees. The lowest province with compulsory fees is Newfoundland and Labrador with \$212 (the CoSSS fee alone is \$290).

I did two phone interviews for the Calgary Sun (<http://www.calgarysun.com/2011/09/17/fee-ride-for-alberta-students>) and Canadian University Press regarding the StatCan report on Friday.

Cheers,
Farid