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Ministry of Advanced Education

INSTITUTIONS HAVE AUTONOMY OVER TUITION FEES

VICTORIA – B.C.'s public post-secondary institutions will be granted autonomy in setting their tuition fee levels, Advanced Education Minister Shirley Bond announced today.

"We are restoring post-secondary institutions' responsibility for determining their own tuition fee levels," Bond. "Six years of frozen fees, combined with lack of proper funding in previous years, have put enormous financial pressures on institutions. Institutions have firmly told us that they need this flexibility to protect and improve the quality of education they provide and meet students' needs.

"We said we would fully fund the five per cent tuition reduction in the current fiscal year, and we have honoured that commitment. We also said we would consult with educators, students and administrators on the hidden costs to both students and institutions of previous tuition freezes that were not properly funded by government.

"Clearly, most students would have liked to maintain the freeze forever. But that's not realistic. Among the concerns we heard were decreased student access, increased waiting lists and reduced course availability."

A university student who is forced to take five years to complete a four-year degree due to lack of available courses can incur an added \$11,000 in study and living expenses, and forgo employment income during the additional time they remain in school.

"Without this autonomy, institutions will not be able to meet the demand for increased student access and improved quality of education," Bond said. "Institutions are in the best position to determine what level of fees is fair, reasonable and affordable, working together with the students they serve. We fully expect they will make those decisions appropriately and responsibly, taking into account the hidden costs students face."

Legislation will be introduced in the upcoming session to restore institutions' autonomy over tuition fee decisions.

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