



# Listening to Albertans on Affordability

## ISSUES AND CONCERNS

- Financial difficulties have reached the point where growing numbers of students are accessing food banks in order to get by.
- Lack of money and the need to work much longer hours at outside jobs are contributing to substantially increased stress on the part of students, with physical and psychological consequences.
- Too many students are sacrificing academic performance by having to work long hours at outside jobs in order to simply get by.
- There is a high level of frustration among students whose families cannot provide assistance, who do not qualify for scholarships, who cannot earn enough money from low-paying jobs, and for whom loans are inadequate.
- Far too many students simply cannot qualify for loans, for reasons which often do not seem fair or reasonable.
- We have taken the wrong approach in dramatically downloading costs to individuals, especially since society still continues to benefit from the individuals' expenditures.
- The prospect of crushing debt loads pushes more students away from longer programs and into shorter courses, and therefore into less education.
- The impact of having to work long hours at jobs during their school terms leads some

students to take as many as seven years to finish an undergraduate degree, with a consequent loss of earning years.

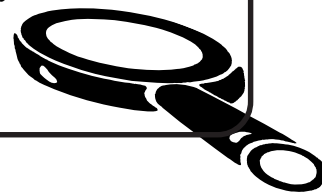
## SUGGESTED DIRECTIONS

- Take action to reduce the proportion of the total cost of student loans that goes to administration.
- Redirect funding to improve the student loan system to prevent long-term debt for students.
- We need immediate and significant affordability relief, starting with ways to convert loans to grants.



*My main concern is affordability. Tuition is so high that I am going to have to take out a large student loan plus work and try to manage my studies. If the government is so concerned with individuals (such as myself) continuing on to a post-secondary education, then they should put money towards the institutions to lower the cost; after all - they just got a 2.8 billion surplus.*

**Deanna - High school student, Daysland**



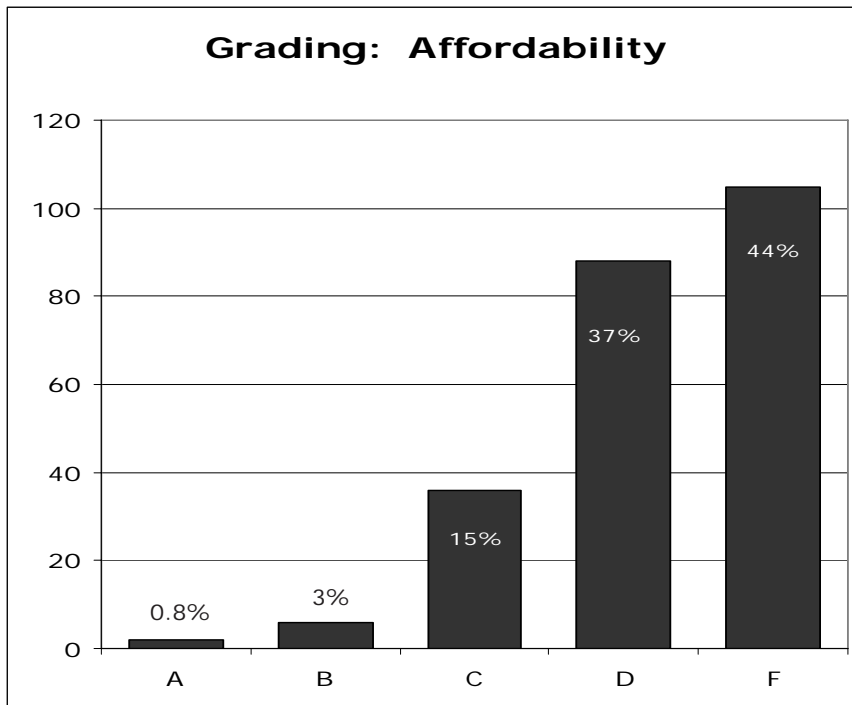


- It is difficult and frustrating to deal with the student loan/finance administrative structure. Rather than facilitating education, this system seems to put up roadblocks and barriers and is widely perceived as unfair.

- We need to get more information on how long it takes students to pay off debts, and on the numbers that declare bankruptcy.
- We need to look more closely at rural/urban differences in post-secondary issues and at the potential advantages and opportunities of rural settings.
- Students need more grants and lower tuition.
- We must look more closely at the impact of these large cost increases on the enrolment of low income students.
- Avoid turning to “income contingent loan repayment” because of its demonstrated negative impacts.
- We should consider making all undergraduate programs tuition free, in the manner that exists in K-12.

**Public Response to the Question:**

**How would you grade the government on its commitment to ensure an affordable post-secondary education system where cost is not a barrier to students?**



**Report Card Key**

- A** = exemplary performance
- B** = more than satisfactory performance
- C** = some concerns, but satisfactory performance overall
- D** = does not meet expectations, poor performance
- F** = complete breakdown of responsibility, dismal performance