

Keyano College (Fort McMurray) October 11 - Selected Highlights

ISSUES, CONCERNS AND SUGGESTED DIRECTIONS RAISED BY PARTICIPANTS

- The issue of affordability is a major concern in Fort McMurray where the cost of a one-bedroom apartment is close to \$1500. The student residences here have long waiting lists, so it is difficult to get in. The current student loan system will not cover these high costs, and many students will go to other colleges situated where the cost of living is not so high. (*faculty*)
- Many of my friends from high school are not interested in going to college because the costs are so high and they can make good money here in Fort McMurray. It is good if they are able to get a trade, but many people do not even bother to try to get into an apprentice program. (*student*)
- The support staff at the college are overloaded as there are only two instructional support staff for the whole college. It is very hard for me to be paying off my student loan on top of all of my living expenses here. With all the cuts to post-secondary education and the cost of living here, I am sure it is difficult for the college to attract staff with the wages they pay. (*support staff and former student*)
- When I went to university it was possible to earn enough money in the summer to cover the cost of going to school. Now, with the high cost of tuition and living, students have to work long hours and/or go heavily into debt. The government needs to renew its commitment to post-secondary education to the same level it was in the 1980s. (*faculty*)
- My parents earn just enough money to make me ineligible for a student loan. Unlike many of my friends and other people I know, I am lucky that I can use money from an inheritance to go to school. The reality is that families that are in the lower income brackets cannot put money into RESPs. (*student*)
- The increased cost of education has been transferred to the individual. These increased fees allow the wealthy people's children a better chance of getting into university and the professional faculties, because the costs are too high for many qualified students from poorer families. We may live in a democracy but not everyone has the same power, and this type of system favours those with money. (*faculty*)



- I came from Germany to take the instrument building program here at Keyano, but it is very hard to cover all of the costs. As an international student, I have to pay \$4000 in tuition and I am only allowed to get a job at the college. In Germany, tuition is free, even for foreign students. Foreign students should not have to pay more than Canadian students. (*foreign student*)
- The student loan system does not consider the financial situation of the whole family. For example, my father cannot support my education costs because he is paying for the costs for my grandmother, I have two younger brothers and my mother is also planning on going back to college. Yet the student loan people just look at how much money he makes and say I am not eligible for a loan. (*student*)
- Student loans claw back 80% of all money you make over the \$225/month limit. I think they should take out the earnings exemption limit so we can survive. (*student*)
- There is a new program at the college to help upgrade students' writing skills, but these initiatives should also be in the high schools. It was hard to do well when I had 35 students in my English 30 class. (*upgrading student*)
- While class sizes have gone up over the past 15 years, the total student enrolment at the college has been going down the past few years. (*faculty*)
- Of the 30 friends I had in high school, only five have gone on to post-secondary education. It would be good if there were counsellors in the high schools who could talk to the students about what they might want to do and could provide some career advice. (*student*)