UNB students protest tuition hike

By JARED DURELLE

About 100 students attended the University of New Brunswick’s Senate meeting in Fredericton on March 27 to show their opposition to a proposed tuition hike.

Students say this is not about themselves but future students who will be affected by the tuition hikes.

“We’re doing this for future students. The tuition hike won’t come into effect until 2019-2020, which is when we’re graduating. It’s absurd that they’re paying almost twice as much as we paid, I feel that the way it’s been handled is unfair,” said Kathleen Adams, a law student.

“I started #KeepTheDoorOpenUNB so people from different socioeconomic backgrounds can gain access to education. We are asking for a delay so this can be discussed and a more acceptable offer put on the table instead of pushing it through,” stated Adams.

UNB is proposing a differential tuition hike in order to balance its 2020-2021 budget. They are proposing differential tuitions for each program based on demand in each faculty and program.

UNB President Eddy Campbell has said that he will delay the decision until the Board of Governors’ meeting in May. However, students are not happy that this decision could be made while most students are away. They want the decision delayed until October.

Today, general tuition is $6,626/year, excluding fees. With fees included, most of which are mandatory, annual tuition is above $7,536. The proposed hikes are based on the Tuition Review Task Force’s findings on demand for programs. According to UNB documents, the task force was “made up of faculty, staff, and students from both campuses.”

Opposition to differential tuition fees

Law students are among those organizing against the tuition hike.

Jill Pilgrim, law representative on the UNB Student Union, explained the tuition increase: “They’re switching to a differential fee model based on faculty. Current students will be grandfathered in while new [Law] students will have to pay the 50% increase for the same education. This sets up new students to be hit with much more debt than those before them.”

Serena Smith, also a law student, said, “If they’re comparing us to Dalhousie [University] in cost then they should be providing the same benefit to [the Law] faculty. The increase is making an elite program even more elite. I came here to help others and benefit my community after saving and working two to three jobs to stay here. If they were closer in cost, I would pick Dalhousie for the same cost and higher benefits just because there’s transparency with the funding.”

UNB is proposing to increase tuition for law students from $6,626 to $10,000 with a program fee taking total tuition to $13,950, bringing the total cost of a three-year law degree to $41,850.

Students are not happy with UNB belittling their concerns by suggesting that they just “graduate on time” as was suggested by Eddy Campbell at the Senate meeting.

Before going to the UNB Senate meeting, students made signs in the presence of Fredericton South MLA and Conservative Oromocto-Lincoln-Fredericton MLA, Jody Carr, Green Party of New Brunswick Leader, David Coon, and Conservative Dromacto-Lincoln-Fredericton MLA, Jody Carr, who both voiced their support for the students.

“Students are already overburdened with debt. They’re drowning in debt. After the MOU was signed with the province I thought that was the end of the story,” said Coon.

“I’m primarily concerned with the burden that’s been put on students. Our party’s objective is that university tuition be removed,” stated Coon.

“The engagement of the students is impressive because they are fighting for the viability of their program in the future,” said Carr. “When you have a 50% increase in one shot, that’s quite alarming especially after the university signed an agreement to keep stable tuition and now they’ve announced massive increases that don’t follow that agreement.”

The students only found out about the tuition hike framework a week ago from UNB’s VP Academic George MacLean, the chair of the Tuition Review Task Force.

During the Senate meeting, students stood silent in the back as the meeting proceeded. UNB President Campbell barred cameras and microphones from recording the meeting. Students had to wait for a number of items to be addressed by the Senate before MacLean’s presentation continued on page 2
N.B. government fights climate change cautiously

By NORM KNIGHT

Under federal pressure, the government of New Brunswick has introduced climate change legislation. It calls for a threefold reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, but critics say the legislation lacks measures to achieve the greenhouse gas reduction goal.

Louise Corbett, Executive Director of the Conservation Council of New Brunswick, calls the Climate Change Act “unsurprising” and says: “There are no new incentives, financial or otherwise, to innovate, reduce pollution, or change behaviour.”

Bill 39, the Climate Change Act, is New Brunswick’s climate change legislation. It was introduced in December and has two main provisions: it sets greenhouse gas reduction targets, and it establishes a Climate Change Fund to help fight global warming.

The Act is part of Canada’s effort to fulfill the climate commitments it made in Paris, France in December 2015.

Ten months after the Paris accord, Ottawa told provinces they must tax greenhouse gas emissions at not less than $10 a tonne in 2018, rising to $50 a tonne in 2022. Alternatively, Ottawa will accept cap-and-trade schemes if they would result in a 30 per cent reduction from 2005 emission levels by 2030.

Two local experts regard the $50 carbon tax as inadequate. Louise Comeau, director of UNB’s Environmental and Sustainable Development Research Centre, says $50 a tonne is less than the “social cost” of greenhouse gas emissions.

Herb Emery, Chair of Regional Economics at UNB, and Louise Comeau say Ottawa will reject the New Brunswick plan for that reason but provincial Environment Minister Serge Rousselle says Ottawa will accept it.

“The federal backstop is really going to be more about taxing consumer,” Emery says.

The Climate Change Fund, which is the concrete measure in Bill 39, will consist of monies transferred from the already existing provincial tax on gasoline and diesel fuel.

Gasoline will continue to be taxed at 15.5 cents a litre but starting this year 2.3 cents of that will go into the Climate Change Fund instead of into general revenue.

Any savings from the federal carbon price schedule, Emery says: “It’s a bit like the old ‘it’s a cut, it’s a drop in the bucket’ situation.”

“Uninspiring” and says: “There are no new incentives, financial or otherwise, to innovate, reduce pollution, or change behaviour.”

The amount is notionally in line with the federal price schedule, but represents no additional cost to fuel users and therefore no new disincentive to fuel use.

The Act specifies in its pricing of greenhouse gases that such measures could be considered ‘ resets’ and that the fund could receive money from greenhouse gas reductions and credits from provinces they must tax greenhouse gas emissions at no financial or otherwise, to innovate, reduce pollution, or change behaviour.

Rather than achieving the stability that she had hoped for, her H&C application led to Lucy’s worst nightmare: an application with the help of a lawyer in September 2017.

In January of this year, however, a CBSA officer informed her lawyer that Lucy’s file would not be studied unless she turned herself in to face deportation. Under Canadian immigration law, this is illegal: section 25 of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act states that the Minister must study all humanitarian applications filed inside Canada – barring some exceptions that don’t apply to Lucy. The actions of this agent have nonetheless been carried out without any oversight and without the involvement of the authority of the Canada Border Services Agency – an agency with no oversight body and a history of clear acts of abuse.

The very least the Canadian government can do is to ensure that Lucy’s application is processed and that she receives a full decision before being uprooted from the community that she has spent so many years building. Her violent arrest only reinforces for the message that the members of our community must remain in the shadows, isolated and in fear.

But Lucy’s story also reminds us that processing an application before deporting someone is not enough. We must continue to fight against the injustices of the immigration system, to move beyond a case-by-case structure and implement a comprehensive regularization program that guarantees the safety and dignity of all non-status people who live here.

For more information, visit the Solidarity Across Borders website.

“Any Darwish is a member of Solidarity Across Borders, a migrant justice network based in Montréal/Tiohtià:ke on unceded Kanien’kehá:ka territories. She grew up in the farming region of Montérégie, on Wabanahkik lands split by the US – Canada border.”

This story was first published by Briarpatch.