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## **A Frozen Budget is a Real Cut: SAMRU REC Warns Provincial Budget Ignores Reality for Calgary Students**

**March 10, 2026 Calgary, AB** — The Students' Association of Mount Royal University (SAMRU) says the 2026/2027 proposed provincial budget does nothing to help students struggling with the skyrocketing cost of living, says the Students' Association of Mount Royal University (SAMRU). Despite rising costs for rent, food, and tuition, the provincial government has chosen to keep funding for universities and student aid flat.

"A frozen budget might look stable on paper, but for a student choosing between textbooks and groceries, or between groceries and rent, it feels like a major cut," says Tala Abu Hayyaneh, President of SAMRU's Representation Executive Council (REC). "Students can't keep holding the line while their bills keep climbing. We need a budget that actually reflects the world we're living in."

This is also inconsistent with the province's own stated direction under Alberta 2030: Building Skills for Jobs, which identifies goals including improving access and student experience, strengthening internationalization, and improving sustainability and affordability, including strengthening student aid. Alberta 2030 explicitly references increasing need-based financial aid so Albertans have the support they need to pursue post-secondary education.

The timing is especially significant given the government's recent Expert Panel on Post-Secondary Institution Funding and Alberta's Competitiveness, which reviewed Alberta's post-secondary funding framework and submitted recommendations addressing funding mechanisms, tuition and student aid, institutional sustainability, and competitiveness.

Even the government's own experts admit the current way we fund schools isn't working, noting that a strong post-secondary funding model is a strategic issue tied to the province's economic future.

"If Alberta is serious about workforce development, innovation, and economic competitiveness, it must treat student affordability and institutional sustainability as core budget priorities," says Abu Hayyaneh. "Alberta says it wants a skilled workforce and a strong economy, but you can't build that future by making it harder and more expensive for people to get an education.

SAMRU REC calls on the Government of Alberta to:

- Increase need-based student aid, including grants, to reflect current cost-of-living realities.
- Provide meaningful base operating funding increases to public post-secondary institutions to support enrolment growth, student services, and academic quality.
- Align budget decisions with Alberta 2030 commitments, especially on access, affordability, and student experience.
- Engage students directly in implementation discussions related to post-secondary funding reform and the Expert Panel recommendations.

"Alberta can and should do better if it wants a strong, skilled, and competitive future," said Abu Hayyaneh.

SAMRU REC remains ready to work with government, institutional leaders, and sector partners on solutions that improve affordability, protect educational quality, and strengthen Alberta's post-secondary system for the long term.