
New Alberta Student Aid Changes Create Blatant Financial Barriers for Students, warns SAMRU Representatives

June 3, 2026 Calgary, AB – Upcoming changes to Alberta Student Aid will force students and families to shoulder significantly more post-secondary costs, exacerbating an already severe student crisis. The Students' Association of Mount Royal University (SAMRU) Representation Executive Council (REC) warns these shifts will create insurmountable financial barriers for many learners.

Effective August 1, 2026, Alberta Student Aid will double the Minimum Student Contribution from \$1,500 to \$3,000 and reinstate parental and spousal contribution assessments into provincial aid calculations.

"Students know they have a role to play in funding their education, but affordability is already at a breaking point," said Noel Ormita, President of SAMRU's Representation Executive Council (REC). "When the government increases expectations on students and families without factoring in the reality of whether they can actually pay, it blocks regular Albertans from pursuing higher education. In addition, the government may claim tuition remains stable, but doubling the mandatory student contribution essentially equates to a \$1,500 tuition hike on Alberta's lowest-income learners."

The return of parental and spousal contribution requirements is particularly damaging. The provincial funding formula assumes students have access to financial support from family members or partners, ignoring the reality of many learners. Under the current policy, a family's inability or refusal to contribute is not sufficient grounds to waive the assessment.

"Financial aid assessments should reflect the support students actually receive, not what an arbitrary formula assumes they will receive," said Mariana Mejia Salazar, Vice President External of SAMRU REC. "When these expected family contributions do not materialize, students are left stranded with a massive funding gap."

SAMRU REC notes that forcing students to bridge this gap will directly harm their academic performance and mental health.

"When students are expected to contribute more financially, they will have to sacrifice their studies to work grueling hours to make ends meet," said Julia Madden, Vice President Academic of SAMRU REC. "This directly compromises academic success and student well-being, making it harder to succeed inside and outside the classroom."

While SAMRU REC welcomes some positive framework adjustments, including exemptions for the Canada Disability Benefit and the Alberta Disability Assistance Program, and expanded funding for the New Beginnings Bursary, they emphasize that provincial student aid investment remains well below historical levels.

"Students and their families shouldn't have to choose between buying groceries and paying tuition," said Liv Lopez, Vice President Student Affairs of SAMRU REC. "We welcome targeted support, but student aid policy must reflect the reality students live every day."

SAMRU REC calls on the Government of Alberta to:

- Halt the reinstatement of parental and spousal contribution assessments.
- Increase need-based grants and bursaries to target the worst of the affordability crisis.
- Engage students directly in future consultations regarding student financial assistance policy.

SAMRU REC remains ready to work with the Government of Alberta and sector partners to improve affordability, strengthen student supports, and ensure student financial assistance policies reflect the realities facing learners across the province.

About SAMRU: The Students' Association of Mount Royal University (SAMRU) represents and advocates for the interests of over 13,000 undergraduate students at Mount Royal University in Calgary.

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