

The price of your future

Students across the nation can expect to pay an average of \$4347 in tuition fees this year, up by 3.2 per cent from 2005/06. Tuition costs rose in six provinces while the rest remain virtually unchanged. Read on to find out how students throughout Canada are pinching pennies to prepare their minds for the professional world.

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According to Statistics Canada, average tuition fees in Alberta are down 0.2 per cent—from \$4838 to \$4828—compared to the 2005/06 academic year, with an average additional compulsory fee of \$567 annually.

Though last year marked the 25th consecutive year that the University of Alberta raised tuition, an increase of 6.4 per cent, or \$307 for a full-time student, this hasn't translated to higher costs for students thanks to the Alberta Government. For the past two years, the Province has given rebates directly to institutions to cover the added costs, leaving students to pay the same rates as in 2004/05. Last year, rebates amounted to a \$43 million, an average of \$282 per full-time student, varying depending on institution, course load and program.

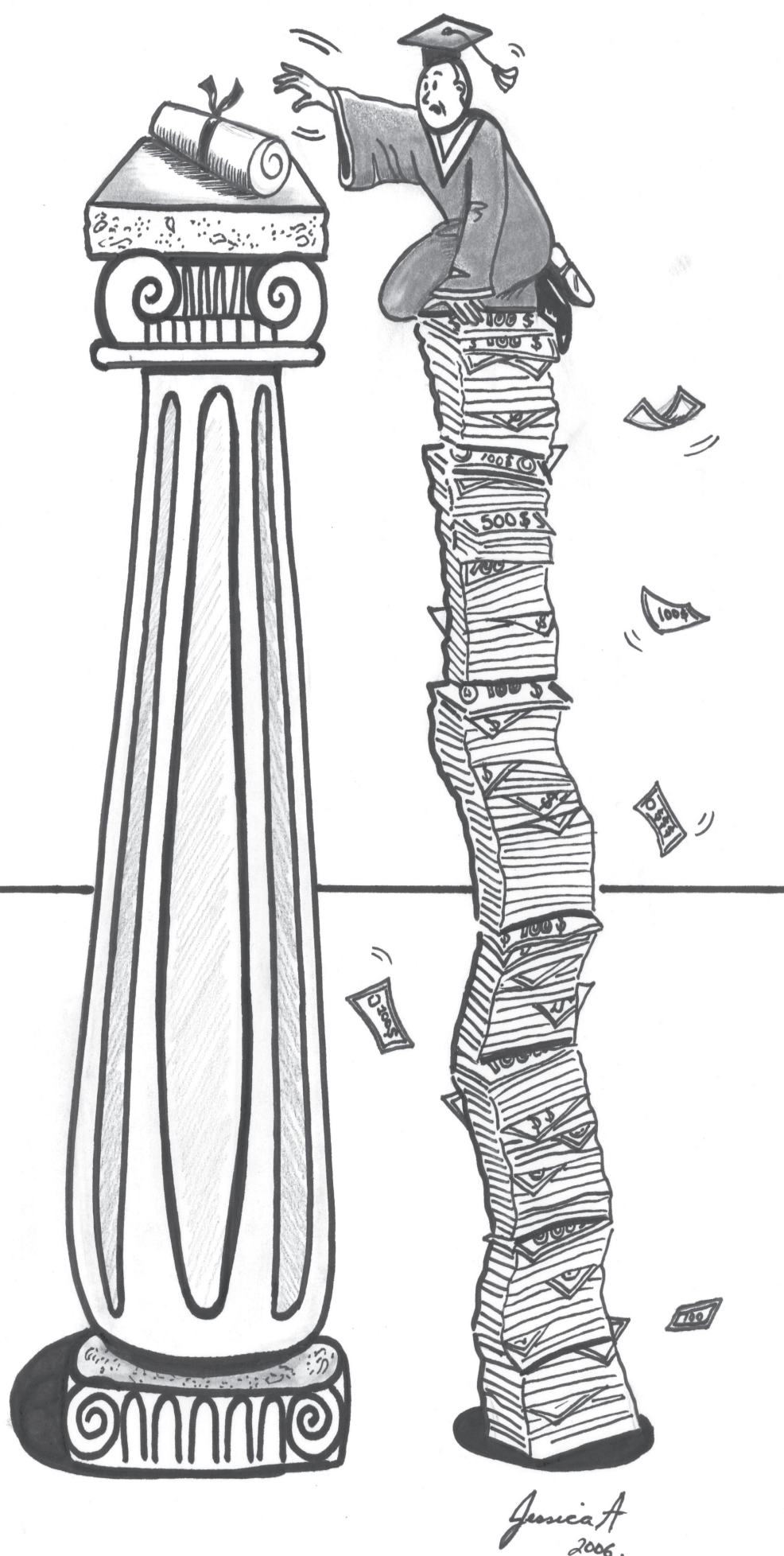
For years, the tuition policy in Alberta stated that 30 per cent of a university's budget could be derived from tuition fees. But in May, despite fierce criticism from student groups and Opposition MLAs, the government passed Bill 40, which effectively removed tuition policy from legislation and placed it in regulation—allowing future policies to be established by Cabinet without first going through debate in the Legislature.

The move came after Alberta's year-long postsecondary education review and Premier Ralph Klein's February 2005 promise to create the most affordable postsecondary institutions in the country.

The government justified the bill, saying that since there will be no fall session—due to Ralph Klein's pending resignation and the leadership race to follow—Bill 40 would still allow them to make changes to the tuition policy. However, that hasn't happened yet. Furthermore, there was indeed a fall session, albeit a short one. Student groups have criticized Bill 40 saying that though, in theory, it could provide continuous improvement to the tuition policy, the reality is that it creates an unstable policy that could change at the Cabinet's whim—for better or for worse.

And though Statistics Canada reports that Alberta's average undergraduate tuition fees have actually gone down by 0.2 per cent, Alberta students are quick to point out that tuition fee levels haven't gone down at all—students are essentially paying the same as they were in 2004/05, while institutions continue to the costs with the government footing the bill.

In 1991, tuition for a full-time undergraduate student in Alberta was \$1286, the second lowest tuition in Canada, according to Statistics Canada. Since that time, Alberta has seen the highest tuition hike in the nation, with a 275.3 per cent increase. Out of the ten provinces, Alberta currently ranks fourth for affordability, lagging behind Québec, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Manitoba.



Fees in Alberta schools

(per year for a student taking a 30 credit, full-time course load)

University of Alberta

Tuition fees: \$4537.20

Fees: \$509.94

Total: \$5042.14

University of Calgary

Tuition: \$4590

Fees: \$589.78

Total: \$5179.78