CHANGES IN TUITION POLICY
NATURAL POLICY EXPERIMENTS IN FIVE COUNTRIES

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Press Release
Tuition policy changes alone not enough to enhance access to university

Montreal, August 16, 2004—Changes in tuition policy on their own are insufficient to address concerns of access to university, a report released by the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation revealed today.

The report, \textit{Changes in Tuition Policy: Natural Policy Experiments in Five Countries}, prepared for the Foundation by Watson Scott Swail and Donald E. Heller of the Educational Policy Institute, finds that tuition policy decisions must be considered in a broader context if they are to impact on aggregate university enrolment.

“Access to university depends on tuition, but it also depends on debt levels, available student financial assistance, government support of institutions, and Canadians’ attitudes and approaches to post-secondary education,” said Norman Riddell, the Foundation’s executive director and chief executive officer. “A tuition policy change, on its own, will not necessarily have a meaningful impact on access to higher education, especially if no provision is made to increase the availability of university spaces. Tuition policy needs to be addressed as part of a greater whole.”

The report examined tuition increases, reductions and freezes in four Canadian provinces, three American states, the United Kingdom, Ireland and Australia. Increases in tuition in some jurisdictions have not had a negative impact on total university enrolment, while tuition freezes or reductions did not always have the positive impact on enrolment that was anticipated.

“Increases in enrolment may in fact be driven more by the strength of existing demand among young adults for a university education than by changes in tuition fees” said Andrew Parkin, the Foundation’s director of research and program development. Parkin also cautioned that tuition hikes may have other negative effects not documented in the study. “The available data doesn’t tell us how low-income and traditionally disadvantaged groups are faring in the wake of these changes, which means that we can’t know if certain groups of students are having serious difficulty coping with tuition hikes.”

The Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation is a private, independent organization created by an act of Parliament in 1998. It encourages Canadian students to strive for excellence and pursue their post-secondary studies. The Foundation distributes $285 million in the form of bursaries and scholarships each year throughout Canada. Since its inception, it has awarded $1.3 billion in the form of 420,000 bursaries to Canadian post-secondary students.

To download the report, visit the Foundation’s Web site, at www.millenniumscholarships.ca.

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