

Minister, students meet

Representatives from UNBC's student society will be discussing the concerns of the student body over the fate of the tuition fees with the person who has the power to recommend lifting or continuing the six-year-long tuition deep-freeze.

Minister of advanced education Shirley Bond has invited 32 student representatives to meet with her in person in Vancouver today, including the Northern Undergraduate Student Society's director of student affairs Moezine Hasham and director of external affairs, Nedinska MacEachern.

"I've been getting mixed feedback from students," says Ms. MacEachern. "Some would like to see a

rise in fees so services and choices would be more diverse ... And there are those who have a longterm investment in education in Prince George and would like to see the tuition freeze stay."



Bond

MacEachern says she and Mr. Hasham have been frantically gathering input from students since receiving the invitation to the meeting earlier this month.

NUGSS has also consulted with UNBC satellite campuses in outlying communities, as well as with graduate students normally outside their sphere of influence. The master's student association won't be able to send a representative of their own to the consultations.

And although the UNBC

student society isn't affiliated with the Canadian Federation of Students, Ms. MacEachern says NUGSS has been sharing information with the local rep of the CFS.

"We agree that course selection needs to be broadened and more courses provided. B.C. has one of the lowest tuitions in Canada but if we're talking about a three to five per cent raise is that sufficient to offer all of the services students want. Will it have enough effect?" says Ms. MacEachern. "We are really looking forward to see what minister Bond has to say. We want to see what the provincial government is doing looking for more federal funding and how much they value post-secondary education."

"We want to get some sense of what the impact would be if we maintained the freeze or if we lifted it,"

says Ms. Bond. "We want to get a sense of how students feel about the tuition freeze."

Ms. Bond says that the ministry is, in particular, looking for details about student experiences with wait lists and access to desired courses.

The ministry will gather input from students today and administrators and faculty starting November 15. Consultations will continue, says Ms. Bond, until the end of the month. She says that a report on the tuition freeze will be ready in time for the Liberals' February budget deadline.

In addition to the face-to-face meetings, individual students and other stakeholders can give input through a survey on the government's web site, www.aved.gov.bc.ca/tuitionconsultation.



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Belated beetle battle plan

The day has finally come.

Forests minister Mike de Jong will unveil tomorrow in Prince George the provincial government's strategy to deal with the pine beetle infestation spreading throughout B.C.'s interior.

The minister will unveil details of the plan at the office of local sawmill, Lakeland Mills at 11 a.m.

Prince George North MLA Pat Bell says

the delay in the announcement is due to minister de Jong's involvement in ongoing softwood lumber negotiations with the United States.

The beetle has already infested an estimated 50 million cubic metres, or \$4.2 billion worth of timber in north, and north-central B.C. Some estimates say the beetle may cost the province more than \$6 billion in stumpage payments before it's done.

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