

Submitted to the Calgary Herald, May 2, 2013

Excess and Duplication?

Dear Editor,

Re: “A degree of excess”, Editorial, May 2, 2013. You make much of the notion that “some schools need an education in prudent financial management.” But, you omit to observe that academic staff salaries are established via collective bargaining, taking into account national norms. It is these salaries which the Minister of Enterprise and Advanced Education (EAE) seems to be most exercised about, he having looked “very closely at remuneration in the post-secondary sector”, Calgary Herald, April 30, 2013. And which remuneration levels actually, looking at real data, are not out of line with those national norms, at all – see Statistics Canada's report on university remuneration.

On the other hand, academic administrators' remuneration is determined by post-secondary institutions' Boards of Governors and, guess what, those Board members are appointed by... the Minister of EAE. Also, of course, all programmes offered at Alberta post-secondary institutions are approved by the Minister of EAE, so one wonders exactly why the system is, according to the Minister, suffering from rampant programme duplication. If we have rampant duplication, the Ministry created it; if we have over-paid administrators, the Ministry sanctioned and created it. So, is it the schools, or the Ministry that “need an education”? Probably, the answer is a lot more complicated than we have been led to believe, so far.

*Dr. Christopher J. Nicol, Professor of Economics,
University of Lethbridge,
May 2, 2013.*