

## cross-canada briefs

## Breastfeeding should be a right

BY SARAH GALASHAN

VANCOUVER (CUP) — Six years after being told not to breastfeed her daughter at work, Michelle Poirier is still fighting to make breastfeeding in the workplace a legal right.

In a hearing that began March 6th, Poirier charged her former employer, British Columbia's Ministry of Municipal Affairs, with sex discrimination. Her pioneering efforts to have the case heard by the BC Human Rights Commission will determine if women have the right to breastfeed their children at work.

As a speech writer for the ministry, Poirier regularly breastfed her child at her desk over the lunch hour. "It hadn't been a problem. Everyone around me was really supportive and enthusiastic," Poirier said.

After breastfeeding at one of the ministry's public lunch-hour seminars, however, tension developed. Poirier was asked not to attend upcoming lectures, and told not to bring her child to work because it made some staff feel uncomfortable.

As a result, the former ministry employee was forced to take her infant to restaurants or shopping malls over the lunch hour. This, she said, was often an unpleasant experience.

"I was in the Eaton's cafe," said Poirier, "and an elderly woman came up to me and shouted 'you should be doing that in the toilet'."

Poirier said the benefits for her child made the experience worth it.

"This is a health issue," Poirier said, "and for me it was choosing between health and employment."

## Cuts hurt working women

BY RACHEL FUREY

OTTAWA (CUP) — Government cutbacks are hurting working women more than their male counterparts, states a recent report.

Cuts by all levels of government are harder on women than men because there are more women working in areas being cut according to a Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) report released earlier this month.

Two-thirds of the public sector's unionized workforce and 80 per cent of health care workers are women. The federal government has cut \$7 billion over three years from payments to the provinces for health, education and social programs.

"Where women are most are the areas that are being cut back," said Sue Genge, national representative for the women's and human rights department of the CLC.

Genge criticized the federal government saying it has failed to keep its election promise to create jobs. "The Liberals campaigned on jobs and we're seeing an elimination of jobs for women," she said.

Joanne Fleming, a spokesperson for the Prime Minister's Office, says the government's focus is on creating jobs for youth. "The focus is on youth employment. I haven't seen any comments from the Prime Minister about jobs for women," said Fleming.

The number of women employed full-time in Canada decreased by 44,000 from January to February, according to Statistics Canada data. Full-time jobs for men increased by 23,000 for the same time period.

According to the report, government cuts are likely to hurt young working women more than older women.

## Virtual protest at Western

BY PETE BRIEGER

LONDON, ON (CUP) — A group of students at the University of Western Ontario have broken new ground by creating a cyberspace sit in to protest against rising tuition fees.

Dave Tompkins, president of Western's student council, has developed a web page on the Internet that allows students to engage in a "virtual sit-in."

Would-be protesters can join the sit-in by clicking on one of an array of happy faces that appear onscreen. By completing this simple action, the student's name is added to the list of protesters "occupying" the president's office and an e-mail is sent to UWO president Paul Davenport. The e-mail includes the student's identity, demands and any additional comments they wish to convey to the university's president.

As of March 11th, there were 835 students "occupying" Davenport's office.

"Western students are very conservative, but I take nothing away from the actions of the students at other universities. There is still something to be said for a physical confrontation," said Andrew Hui, president of the graduate students council.

"The students' concerns came through as direct and presentable and [the president] appreciates the fact that it is being done in a civil way," explains Dalin Jameson, Davenport's assistant.

## Keep an eye out for the tiger:

## Howe Hall's prized possession kidnapped

BY GINA STACK

Have you seen a 40-year-old, five foot long, 120 pound, fibre-glass tiger? Chances are you haven't, but it happens to be one of Howe Hall's oldest and most secret relics — and it's missing.

The tiger, which is usually stored in the Howe Hall residence council chambers, went missing some time between 8:30 p.m. on Friday, March 14th, and 11 a.m. the next morning.

"You've got to be kidding me," Howe Hall's 1996-97 president Andrew Ferns said he thought when he discovered the tiger had been kidnapped.

"I went and told my treasurer (Chris McLeod) and at that point we simultaneously blamed each other for the theft."

The two executives blamed each other because Ferns holds the only key to the council chambers, and is also the president of the Zeta Psi fraternity. McLeod was suspect because he is currently planning the creation of a Dalhousie and a Saint Mary's University (SMU) Benevolence Society (a prankster's union).

Other than himself and McLeod, Ferns said that SMU would appear to be the prime suspect.

The executive received a cassette tape that had a recorded message stating that a "Lord Alexander" had taken the tiger for a walk, hoped they didn't mind and

claimed it would fit in well with his wild pack of huskies.

Despite this incriminating evidence, Ferns and McLeod believe Acadia is behind the tiger heist.

Ferns said that there is a lot of history behind the tiger and this isn't the first time that it has been liberated from the council chambers.

In 1968, Acadia University residence students stole the tiger and carried it back to their school.

Howe Hall residents retaliated by posing as television repair men and stealing all of the Acadia residence's TVs, as well as re-landscaping the university lawn, redecorating residence and kidnapping a campus security guard. As a result of Howe's actions, the tiger was liberated.

Coincidentally, Acadia University was holding a pub crawl in Halifax the evening the tiger disappeared, and many Acadia students were seen around residence on March 14th.

However, there is still the problem of how Acadia could have entered the council chambers, when Ferns held the only key.

"It's either one of three things," Ferns said in explanation.

"We were initiating the new council and my keys were sitting on the coffee table in my room, so if someone was able to sneak into my room past all of us, they could have got my keys, but I doubt that.

"It is possible that the lock could

have been slimjimmied, I've done it before in high school — hope that doesn't incriminate me.

"Or number three, residence has a system for changing their locks where a master key removes the actual plug of the lock and a new one can be inserted and then opened with any key someone has. SMU, Dal and Acadia all apparently have the same Best system of keys and locks.

"Other than that, I don't know how they got in."

Ferns said that the executive has spoken with Howe's administration and asked it to get in touch with other universities to see if they have heard anything. They have also spoken with individuals they know at other schools who are in executive positions within residence.

Although Acadia is the prime suspect, SMU and the Sigma Chi fraternity at Dalhousie have also stolen the tiger in past years.

"We really don't know who could have done it unless we hear more from them [the thieves]," Ferns said.

Ferns asks anyone who has information that could help locate the tiger to get in touch with Howe Hall.

Ferns said that if the tiger can't be found by conventional methods, certain parties in residence are planning to "visit" the other campuses in an effort to obtain bargaining materials.

## Federal candidates vie for student vote

BY GINA STACK

The federal election has yet to be called, but campaigning has already started in Halifax.

Last Thursday afternoon, federal candidates for the Conservative, Reform, New Democratic and Liberal parties made speeches and answered students' questions at Saint Mary's University.

The subject of the forum was the future of post-secondary education in Canada.

Liberal MP Mary Clancy spoke first and took the most heat from students. Clancy outlined the federal government's current programs to help students find work.

Conservative candidate Terry Donahue slammed the federal government for slashing transfer payments to the provinces and crippling universities. Donahue said a Conservative government would ensure cuts to universities do not go below the current level, and would begin to raise transfers annually by an unnamed percentage.

Donahue also suggested making federal funding available based on the province that a student is studying in rather than his/her province of permanent residence. A proposal such as this has the

potential to benefit Dalhousie since a large number of students are from out of province.

Steve Greene is the Reform candidate. He argued that the government must get its priorities straight.

"The Liberal government cut \$192,000 from the medical school at Dalhousie, and then poured millions into Cape Breton to build a golf course," Greene said with disgust.

Greene said the Reform party would like to see university work on a voucher system. Students would receive a voucher for the full cost of tuition and then "shop around" until they found a school to meet their demands.

"It will give students marketing power," he said.

New Democrat candidate and party leader Alexa McDonough spoke of the social consequences of cuts in funding and higher tuition fees.

"Jean Chretien is Mulroney on steroids," McDonough said, receiving a round of applause.

McDonough said that the federal government has no one fighting for student issues. She said that her party wants to give the Liberals a "wake up call," and that she wants to lead a "strong social

democratic caucus in Parliament."

After the politicians spoke, the floor was opened for questions. Students were to direct their questions at every candidate, but the first student directed his question toward Clancy. The student wanted to know what alternatives there were to more cuts and higher tuition.

Clancy dismissed his search for alternatives as "pie in the sky."

Another student asked what each candidate would do to help mature students find summer employment.

Clancy and Greene argued that no programs should be aimed primarily at mature students because youth unemployment is a larger problem. McDonough argued that the social diversity of university campuses should be recognized. Donahue said as well that the issue should be addressed.

Students also demanded to know what percentage of graduates found work in their field of study, and asked why students should believe anything that they (the politicians) were saying. Neither of these questions were answered well by the candidates, and the forum came to a close with many students still searching for answers.