

## Committee report calls for increased funding to avoid drastic measures



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In their recently released report, the Committee on the Future Role of Universities predicts the demise of quality universities in Ontario if the provincial government continues its current policy of "muddling through". The committee says that only a real growth in funding or a significantly re-structured system under current funding levels will ensure continuing quality of higher education.

The report was highly critical of short-term grants and ad hoc measures, calling for immediate institution of a long-term policy. This bluntly worded report calls for closer links among

government, industry and the universities. It deals with such controversial topics as funding, allocative methods, accessibility, tenure and sabbatical and the affect these might have on the

future welfare of Ontario Universities.

The report goes on at length about the importance of universities to society, industry and business. "To put it bluntly neither B.I.L.D. (Board of Industrial Leadership and Development) nor I.D.E.A. (Innovation Development for Employment Advancement Corp.) will be successful unless universities, which provide the base for innovations, technology and development, are maintained." The importance of a healthy university system to

Ontario's industrial development is emphasized repeatedly. But the ability of universities to meet society's needs depend on resources available.

Painting a bleak picture for the future of Ontario universities, unless there is a real growth in funding, the committee suggests that restructuring would have to occur in order to maintain quality universities in Ontario. There would be one university capable of offering a wide range of high quality programs at all degree levels. Not more than four others would offer a more restricted range at all degree levels. In addition there would be four or five special purpose institutions, including some specifically designed to serve Northern Ontario.

Necessarily most universities would have to be closed or changed significantly. This restructuring would mean a loss of accessibility and research capacity, as well as disruptions in several communities that house universities. This system is not the committee's primary recommendation, but an alternative if the government refuses to increase funding to a reasonable level.

The report accuses the government of denying true accessibility to Northern Ontario, franco-Ontarians, native peoples, part-time students, handicapped, women and those who live a long distance from any university. Recommended is a greater number of part-time programs to service the over-25 group, continuing education for professionals and professional accessibility programs offered in French.

More dramatically they suggest free tuition in the two northern universities for students who have normal residence there. This would

encourage more participation from the northern and native students, a traditionally low participation group.

When dealing with the controversial topic of allocation methods the committee was hesitant to make a recommendation until future funding is known. They say that the current enrolment formula was workable so long as adequate funding is available. Otherwise a new formula must be implemented in order to prevent the current fighting over students in order to procure funds.

The report gives universities a vote of confidence, and recommends that they continue as autonomous institutions. They should, however be held accountable for expenditure of funds.

This regulation should also apply to reviews of faculty and staff, including those with tenure. Tenure, they report states, should not mean untouchable job security, but rather a guarantee of confidence in academic productivity. The committee also recommended that professors be held strictly accountable for sabbatical leaves and that significant work be undertaken on these leaves.

The report affirms, the objectives for universities as set by the Ontario Council for University Affairs (OCUA) and endorsed by the Ontario government. These objectives include to develop a more educated populace; to educate and train people for the professions; to provide study at the highest intellectual level; to conduct basic and applied research and to provide service to the community.

The committee commends the universities for meeting these objectives under limited funding. They say, however, that public funding must increase in order for universities to keep from sinking into mediocrity.

### *Cuts could be devastating*

## Economic priorities override societies broader needs

This column has been written by Barb Taylor, Chairperson of the Ontario Federation of Students, an organization which represents 230,000 students across Ontario.

The recent report on The Future Ontario Universities and the indication from the Federal Government that they would like to cutback \$1.5 billion from post secondary education funding means only one thing: the closure of universities or the severe reduction of programs and courses across the board. This is the cumulative effect of several years of underfunding on the part of the Ontario government and the political decision by the Federal government to pursue the badly thought-out policy of fiscal restraint.

Ministry of College and University officials have said that they see this as only a doomsday scenario. However, the report from the Committee on the Future Role of Universities in Ontario is clear

in their conclusion that universities will have to close in the near future if adequate funding is not forthcoming. Premier Davis has said that he would be reluctant to close universities, however, Davis has known for several years that the system is in rapid decline. In a report from the Ontario Council on University Affairs, the government's own advisory body said that in 1979 that the system was on the brink at that point in time. Countless briefs from the Ontario Federation of Students and other post secondary organizations have warned the government continuously over the last few years that the system has been rapidly deteriorating. The signs are quite evident at all institutions, including York. At York, tutorials which are only intended to have 15 students now have 30 to 50 students registered. Ross library can no longer afford to provide the updated periodicals and books which are needed for a quality education. One of the most obvious effects is tuition

increases which have been in the range of a hundred dollars for every institution over the last few years. These are only a few examples of the results of underfunding. The scenario of university closures is close to becoming reality and all universities are vulnerable, including York. What is the use of a university degree from a school which no longer exists?

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The political priorities of the provincial government which result in underfunding are compounded by the federal government. Currently the federal government provides 73% of the funds for post secondary education in Ontario. In October, Finance Minister

McEachern stated that he would like to see \$1.5 billion cut from federal transfers for education, health and other social services. Strong public reaction to this forced the federal government to set up a task force to examine the entire area of fiscal arrangements with the provinces. The Task Force has recently reported and has concurred with the provincial committee in the area of funding. Even though this Task Force has a majority of Liberal MPs on it, Trudeau has since stated that he would still like to see \$1.5 billion cutbacks.

Provincial and federal cuts combined could have the devastating effects of a 40% reduction in university and college funding across the board, or the closure of several institutions. Government's reaction to the declining situation has been to see universities as more and more of an economic priority as opposed to a social and cultural priority. The federal government is talking about moving education from the social affairs portfolio

to the economic package. The provincial government is discussing the possibility of cutting all studies except for several specialized institutions which would concentrate on technical training. It seems as if the governments economic priorities are beginning to override the broader social and cultural needs of this society.

Student reaction has been strong against the deterioration of education. The Ontario Federation of Students is calling on both governments to increase funding immediately. A petition which is being circulated nationally is available in the CYSF office and will be presented to MPs during a mass lobby at Ottawa in October. Student opposition to underfunding must be vocal if we wish to have any effect. CYSF is also forming an anti-cutbacks committee which is open to all York students. If you care about your education, now is the time to get involved. For more information, call CYSF 667-2515.