

York tenants taking little action as rents rise

by Roxane Brown
and Excalibur Staff

When Cristian Oporto sublet a bachelor apartment at Passy Gardens for the summer, his rent was \$422. At renewal time in September, his rent for the very same bachelor apartment jumped to \$468.

Like other graduate students living at York, Oporto is not protected by provincial laws which would hold his rent down. Osgoode Hall legal aid worker Fiona Jarvis said that's because Ontario's Rent Control Act doesn't apply to university housing.

A former tenant division leader for the legal aid program, Jarvis said she wrote to a standing committee which revised the act last year, saying York shouldn't be able to charge whatever rents it wanted.

Later, she said a Ministry of Housing official told her the law wouldn't be changed because tenants at other universities hadn't complained.

According to Jarvis, people affected here are not doing much complaining themselves. "Unfortunately, what most grad students think is that

they are only at York for a little while, so why bother?"

This rings true for third year Political Science graduate Oporto, who admits he is not very concerned about the act. "I probably know the least about the issue," he said.

This year alone, rents for Passy Gardens, Assiniboine, and Moon Road bachelor apartments have gone up 11 per cent or even higher. So why don't more people leave? According to Oporto, lack of time or the will to look for a new apartment are to blame.

The Rent Control Act only grants York tenants a 90-day notice of rent increases. That also means that as long as the required notice is given, York is free to raise the rent by any amount.

But housing director Peter Ridout said York's

increases have been reasonable, adding rent for apartments that are not bachelors increased by only 6 per

cent this year. This doesn't include another 4 per cent hike for two renovated buildings on Assiniboine Road.

The university agrees to keep within the increases recommended by the Council of Ontario Universities, which is a lobby group for university administrations. While regular landlords are controlled by maximum ceiling rules for rent increases, university landlords are unrestricted by the guidelines the rest of the province must follow.

They must, however, consult tenants groups on rent increases for buildings where apartments have their own bathrooms

and kitchens, or the act applies. Jarvis said this means York graduate tenants could choose between rent control and having a tenants association.

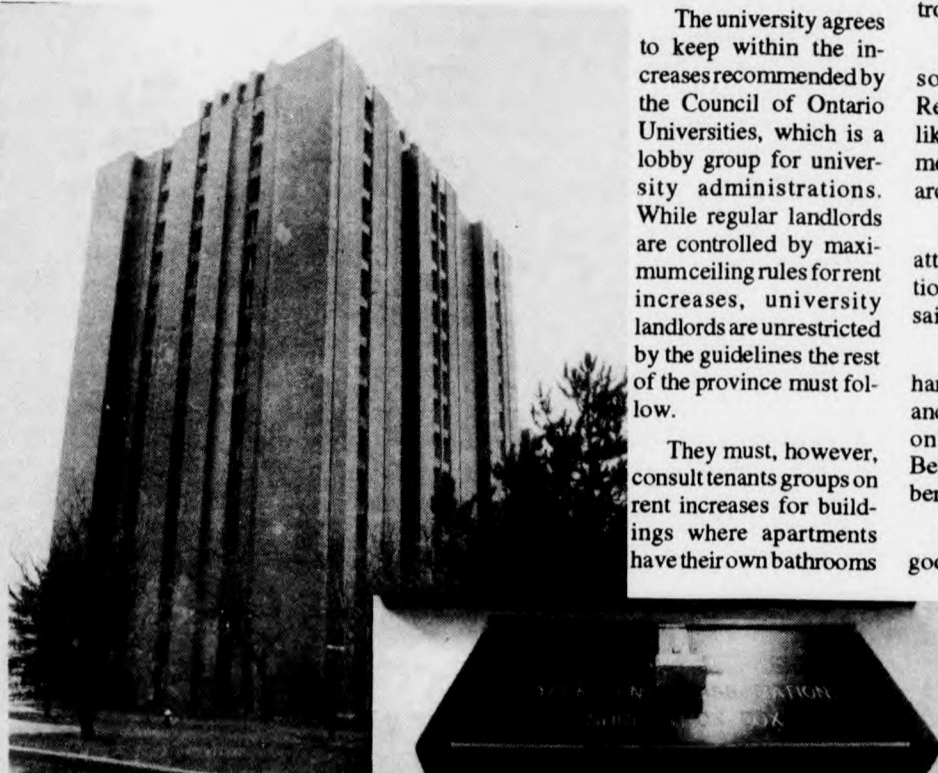
But Ridout and York tenants association vice-president John Reynolds say the university could likely satisfy government requirements just by posting rent increases around the campus.

"If we weren't here, they would attempt to go through the consultation process without us," Reynolds said last month.

He admitted the association, which handles issues ranging from repairs and evictions to rent increases, has only himself and president Joe Bermont-McDowald as active members.

Reynolds said the group has a good relationship with housing officials and will work this year to establish a more formal structure and get more people involved.

Ultimately, York has the final say on whether the rent increases or not. If the tenants association doesn't like it, there are no final appeals.



Rent for Assiniboine Road and other graduate apartments continues to climb. A tenants association suggestion box is at right. • photos by Wayne Todd

Students fighting shorter library hours

by Jordan H. Green

Pressure from Glendon's student government has forced the college's library to partly reverse cuts to operating hours.

Midnight weekday closing times for the Frost Library and for the Downsview campus' Scott Library were scrapped over the summer. Scott began closing at 11 p.m. and Frost at 10:30.

Frost started closing at 11 pm last month, but Glendon's student union is still unsatisfied.

Last Monday, the group started a "Frozen out of Frost" protest by circulating a petition and giving students the office telephone numbers of York vice-president Stephen Fienberg and university librarian Ellen Hoffmann.

"A lot of students work, and should be able to get access [to the library]. It is discouraging if you get there after ten, and the bell rings 30 minutes before it closes," student

union president Sharmila Khare said last month.

"Reducing our options reduces our opportunity [to study]," added Khare.

Administrators say Frost reduced its hours because of infrequent late night use, budget cuts and the loss of three staff positions.

The new hours are only firm until Christmas, and further changes are possible based on use, said Toni Olshen, an associate librarian.

Library staff are monitoring use based on circulation, reference and the computer catalogues, Olshen added.

The York Federation of Students has not taken any action yet on Scott Library's hours, as they are waiting to see how the situation develops before acting.

"The issue was raised in council the other night. It was discussed for a long time, its especially a problem for Atkinson students," said Nikki Gershbnain, president of the

Federation.

The federation may talk to the Atkinson College Students Association about a joint venture to act on the reductions in service, said Gershbnain.

"We want services," said Khare. "Service is the foundation of a university. A library is the basis for this service, as it's [part of] the acquisition of knowledge."

Lack of late night use wastes staff time, because they cannot leave their desks to shelve books while students are in the library, said Olshen.

"If there are only three students [in the library], it's having [the library staff] sit at their



Glendon student president Sharmila Khare holds petition for more library hours • photo by Robert Oliphant

desk doing nothing," said Julie Drexler, Frost's librarian.

Some students say the service cuts have affected their studies.

Paul Cobbian, a third year international studies student said the library closes by the time he gets off work.

"I didn't have this problem last year. This year the library is understaffed."

"Several weeks ago, I wasn't able to get a book because it was closed, so I went to [the Scott Library] and that was closed," said Gladys Wong, a first year student.

Glendon student union officials are also upset that Frost is considered a branch library, saying it does not meet the needs of francophones on the campus.

"Many of the International Studies students complained that all the French titles are at the Keele campus," said Jeremy Goldstein, Glendon's external affairs vice-president.

york briefs

Settlement near on non-union cleaners

by Joe Sant'Arcangelo

A dispute over the Student Centre management's right to hire non-union cleaning employees is getting closer to a resolution.

A tentative settlement between the corporation and York's Canadian Union of Public Employees went before the centre's executive committee for ratification on Monday. Results were not known at press time.

The university gave the centre permission to hire outside the union in a 1988 contract. The union formally had exclusive rights to clean all of York's buildings.

"Is this an attempt by the university to use the Student Centre to break our union, by finding out the limit to which our union affiliation will deal with contracting out?" local president Ilpo Lehto asked in a 1991 press release.

The union's decision to look for a settlement outside an Ontario labor board came after the centre reorganized its contract for bidding by private companies. The hearing is scheduled for Nov. 3.

"We came forward because of one of *excalibur's* articles which reported that [the center] was looking to split up the contract," Lehto said, referring to a decision to accept bids to clean three separate areas of the building.

"I saw it as a window of opportunity for settlement." Centre general manager Rob Castle said a new concept — allowing union members to clean offices in the centre which were once part of other buildings — was a "guiding principle" in reaching the settlement.

This means an office located in Central Square before the centre was built, would again be handled by the union.

Neither party, however, would elaborate on the content of the agreement.

Crystal Cleaning Services, a private company, currently holds full responsibility for cleaning the centre.

Glendon accepts new health plan

by Jordan H. Green

Glendon College will have a health plan for the next school year, following a referendum two weeks ago.

Last year, Glendon College students voted to pull out of a Blue Cross health care package similar to the one covering Downsview undergraduates now, due to a proposed premium increase.

The \$103 Mutual Life policy (for each full time student) includes 80 per cent prescription drug coverage. A total of 236 students voted yes to the plan, while 131 voted no.

Blue Cross's \$132 policy at the Downsview campus gives 100 per cent prescription drug coverage.

Both policies are automatically deducted from students' tuition fees, and refunds are available to those who show proof that they already have coverage.

Clubs both claim symbols, history

continued from page 1

"You cannot express cultural heritage at the expense of someone else," Parakatis added.

He argued the map is an illustration of Macedonian intentions to claim what is now the largest province in Greece.

"I can't understand how they would get to that position," says Nitsis, "nowhere have we written that we have territorial claims. The map is an ancient historical map."

She added that the Greek students should have taken their complaints to university authorities and not surrounded the booth that way.

A yellow star burst on a red background — identified with King Philip, father of Alexander the Great — is also claimed by both sides as a cultural symbol.

"Their use of an ancient Greek symbol on their flag is an act of aggression," said Parakatis.

Hellenic association president Chris Stamatopoulos equates Macedonian use of the star burst to a new country which decides to adopt the Statue of Liberty or the Star of David as a national symbol. Macedonians claim the

symbol is theirs and both sides have an equal number of experts to verify their position.

The September incident is not isolated. Last year, the Hellenic students invited a Greek professor to lecture on "The Falsification of Macedonian History."

Macedonian students say they were concerned and asked York Race and Ethnic Relations officer Chet Singh whether the event could be canceled.

The lecture took place, Singh said, because the Macedonian association could not provide evidence that the event would promote hatred.

Macedonian member Chris Karafile said these incidents would not have happened a few years ago.

"The thing that bothers me is the friendships that have broken up," he said.

The dispute between the two groups extends back over 2,000 years to the time of Aristotle, and is rooted in whether the name "Macedonia" is Greek or not. The issue heated up after the break-up of Yugoslavia, when part of the region declared its independence as the Republic of Macedonia.