

THE GAZETTE

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CIBC withdraws from Student Loan Program

Royal Bank the only student loan game in town

BY ANTHONY SKELTON

Last June the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce (CIBC) opted not to renew its contract for student loans with the province of Nova Scotia, leaving the Royal Bank of Canada as the sole administrator of student loans in the province.

"The government of Nova Scotia was simply not prepared to make any significant changes to the loans program and so we declined to enter into an agreement with them," said Peter McCreath, Director of Communications of CIBC Nova Scotia.

In addition to governmental intransigence, the CIBC cited high student debt loads, unemployment, bankruptcy

and loan defaults and unpalatable risk associated with lending to students as its reasons for not renewing its four-year contract with the Nova Scotia government.

"We felt that the Student Loan Program was simply not sustainable," McCreath said. "Students were acquiring far too much debt and the economic opportunities for students did not exist for students to pay back the loans." Between 1990 and 1996 there was a 250 percent increase in the rate of bankruptcy among Canadian university graduates. The same period saw a significant increase in the amount of students who defaulted on their loans.

McCreath said he thought that the student loans program

could be improved to ameliorate the conditions of debt-ridden students in three ways. First, the government should increase the direct support which they give to students in the way of bursaries and loan forgiveness programs. Second, the government should review the eligibility of educational institutions where the level of student bankruptcy and loan defaulting is reasonably high.

Third, the government should screen prospective borrowers to determine their credit rating and the risk associated with individual students, and then turn down those students who are deemed to be a high risk in terms of bankruptcy.

Jessica Squires, Nova con-



A pair of over-zealous frosh enjoy their orientation week activity. (Photo: Lilli Ju)

SUB-standard facelift

BY JOHN CULLEN

The Dalhousie Student Union Building (SUB) has spent a summer in surgery. Roughly eighty thousand dollars has been spent redecorating the Corner Pocket, Green Room, Union Market and Grawood. According to Ted Chiasson, Treasurer of the Dalhousie Student Union (DSU), the aging building had areas which had not been remodelled for decades.

"The carpet [in the Green Room] was way over due to be replaced. We were actually getting complaints of an environmental nature. That carpet was from the early seventies, late sixties, and it was so old, there were things growing in there." Chiasson sanctioned the expenditure of \$45,000 on a new, less mouldy carpet and matching furniture built in Nova Scotia.

"The furniture down there was bought second-hand from Western [University] in the mid-seventies. So things were due to be replaced," said Chiasson.

But the DSU does not plan to throw the old chairs and

tables out quite yet. When the new furniture arrives in mid-September, cash-strapped societies in the building will have their pick of the Green Room's finest.

The Grawood Lounge has also acquired some new equipment to keep itself competitive with other bars around town. A large screen TV and NTN, an interactive TV trivia game, have been added to boost the Grawood's slumping sales.

"Essentially, at the Grawood, Thursday nights were very good for us, but you can't expect everyone to go to the same bar every night. Now we're trying to appeal to different audiences on different nights," said Chiasson.

Brian Kellow, the Grawood's food manager, feels that the new additions will help pull in new customers.

"Monday Night Football is on now, we have cheap *continued on* food until half-time, and big screen TV's, which is cool, because there never used to be anything going on Monday nights." Kellow is also concerned about the

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Mega-classrooms in the Cohn

BY MARK REYNOLDS

Students enrolled in Biology 1000 this year will be among the first to experience what many see as the way of the future at Dalhousie — the so called "mega-classroom."

The pilot project will see four previously separate sections merged into one, with a total of about 850 students. The class will be held in the Rebecca Cohn auditorium in the Dalhousie Arts Centre.

The new class will be outfitted with slide projectors and audio-visual equipment to cope with the larger space.

"It's great" said Bob Lee, the class coordinator. "It's all state of the art. They have it set up for videos and Powerpoint presentations."

Lee feels that although the

mega-classroom is a new idea at Dal, there is potential for an enhanced learning experience.

"We will have technicians operating the equipment...in the past, professors have tended to avoid showing slides," said Lee.

The professors will also be able to put more into their lectures with this new format.

"The lecturers are going to teach with a different style" said Lee. "Professors will be able to put more effort into their one lecture versus repeating the same lecture four times."

Lee admits that the large class could be intimidating for some students, but the potential for more individual attention does still exist.

"The lecture is only part of

the class...the labs have 24 students each, plus optional tutorials," which will also be smaller in size.

Dalhousie's Academic Vice-President Warrick Kimmins also feels that the new class format is a benefit to both the student and the university.

"We were hoping to make it more professional," said Kimmins who felt that with one professor giving the same lecture, the students would all go to upper year courses with the same background in the subject.

"The lectures will be pedagogically better as well," said Kimmins, adding that the professors will be better prepared and mentally fresh when preparing their lectures.

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THE PRE-PACKAGED PONDERANCE...

"One should respect public opinion in so far as it is necessary to avoid starvation and keep out of prison, but anything that goes beyond this is a voluntary submission to an unnecessary tyranny."
— Bertrand Russell.

NATIONAL NEWS

Several Canadian universities lose big on Bre-X, **page 6.**

Religion versus safer sex: a Catholic school removes condoms from its frosh packs, **page 7.**

Alternative Frosh: McGill students organize an alternative frosh week, **page 7.**

FOCUS

An extensive guide to eating, shopping, cleaning, and anything else you need to know about Halifax, **page 11 & 14.**

Booze, booze, booze. This added bonus is perhaps your most useful university guide, **page 12.**

ARTS & CULTURE

Dalhousie Students play a starring role in Shakespeare by the Sea, **page 15.**

P F Station: hot local band talks about their music, exposure and the pitfalls of improvisation, **page 16.**

Phishing in Maine: forget about other rock festivals this summer. The Great Went has already come and gone, **page 17.**

SPORTS

Men's soccer: gearing up for another run at the National title, **page 21.**

Women's soccer gets a new coach, **page 21.**

Dal wrestling slips on the tights for another season, **page 17.**