

# York prez unwilling audience to ad hoc board meeting

TORONTO (CUP) — After being trapped in her car by frustrated students for nearly two hours, York University president Lorna Marsden had to be escorted off campus by Toronto police.

The demonstration, which took place Mar. 2, began when students jammed into the senate chamber of one of York's satellite campuses and broke up a meeting of the university's Board of Governors. The students were protesting tuition hikes and the strong corporate presence on the university's highest governing body.

Students then held their own Board of Governors meeting, and surrounded a car in which the university president and another senior administrator sat.

"We tried to have a meeting, but [the students] decided otherwise," said Charles Hantho, chairperson of the board. "We had to cancel the meeting."

Hantho is a director of Camco, Inco, TransAlta, AGRA Industries and Imasco, chairperson of Dofasco and Dominion Textile and vice-chairperson of the Business Council on National Issues.

Also sitting on York's board are chairpersons of corporations including McDonald's Restaurants, Trilon Financial, Norma Industries and the president of the CIBC.

One of the organizers of the York protest, Joel Harden, president of the graduate students' union, says students are frustrated with the 36-member board which has plenty of representatives with strong ties to the corporate sector but only two students.

"[The board] is very interested in hearing our voice but, in the end, put us on the head and raise tuition anyway," he said, "and we were not going to let that happen again."

After the board meeting disbanded, Marsden sought sanctuary in her car with fellow administrator Debra Hobson, vice-president student

services. But they still couldn't get away from students even as they drove off the road and onto the campus lawn.

Hobson was formerly the vice-president academic/research at Dalhousie.

With a chairperson and minute-taker on hand, York students presented their alternative agenda.

"I move to freeze tuition fees, partially paid for by Lorna's pay cut," said one student to the cheers of the fellow mock governors, who passed the motion unanimously.

Marsden, a former Senator and vice-president of the Liberal Party and current director of Manufacturer's Life Insurance Company, Gore Mutual Insurance Company and Westcoast

Energy, is Canada's highest paid university president — bringing home \$250,000 annually.

The students unanimously called for the removal of all chief executive officers from York's board, and the full disclosure of the university's finances.

The students finished their meeting by firing Marsden.

Marsden was eventually escorted from the campus in a police car, accompanied by Hobson and a lawyer. Six police cruisers and over a dozen officers attended the scene.

The next day, Marsden's evaluation of the protest was less than glowing.

"It's just a waste of time," she said, adding that students will never be heard while using intimidation tactics.

## Ontario loan program admits 'mistake'

BY CARLA TONELLI

TORONTO (CUP) — The Ontario government has opened a small window for out-of-province student loan recipients to collect what they were originally promised.

The government had calculated students' loans on the cost of living in Ontario, resulting in overgenerous loans for students studying in less expensive provinces.

In mid-academic term, over 4,000 students across the country were told that the second installment of their loans would be an average of \$1,000 less than they were expecting.

But the Personal Living Allowance Review is a new plan to repair damage caused by the improperly calculated loan assessments.

"If individual students found they were in a difficult situation,

they can apply to have their cases looked at," says Danielle Gauvin, spokesperson at the ministry of education, about out-of-province students affected by the winter re-assessment.

But some students are still unaware that the cuts to their loan may still go through, or that they had the option to correct them. Second year University of Winnipeg student William Dixon, says he might not have decided to declare bankruptcy three weeks ago if he knew about the review.

After learning at the end of winter holidays that the Ontario government's reassessment meant the income for his family of four would shrink from \$16,500 to \$13,200, he decided there was no way he could both catch up with his debt and finish his degree.

"They shouldn't be playing with students' educations like this," he says. "I don't like playing games

when I've got a family to consider."

Dixon says he won't be returning to school next year.

Dixon also questions why the onus is on students to appeal for their money back.

"They already know my budget. They don't need any stupid form to tell them again," says Dixon.

Wayne Poirier, Ontario chair of the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS), agrees that the ministry should take the initiative to communicate directly with students. But, he adds, at least the ministry is taking action to rectify their assessment blunder.

"It's one of the few things the government has actually responded to in a reasonable amount of time," he said, pointing to the pressure of the student and financial aid officers' lobby.

When institutional financial aid officers heard about the review plan on Jan. 30, some took it upon themselves to contact students directly when it was clear that the ministry wasn't.

it loses its momentum."

But Greg Guy, a linguistics professor who witnessed the spectacle, says he sees it differently.

"I'm very encouraged to see people active. A lot of the issues raised here were raised during our [faculty] strike. It's good to hear another voice."

During the 52-day faculty strike last year, York professors spoke out against the growing corporate presence on campus.

"The board will certainly have learned from this," said Glendon College professor, David Clipsham.

But the chair of the real Board of Governors begs to differ.

"This kind of thing doesn't help [students'] cause," said Hantho.

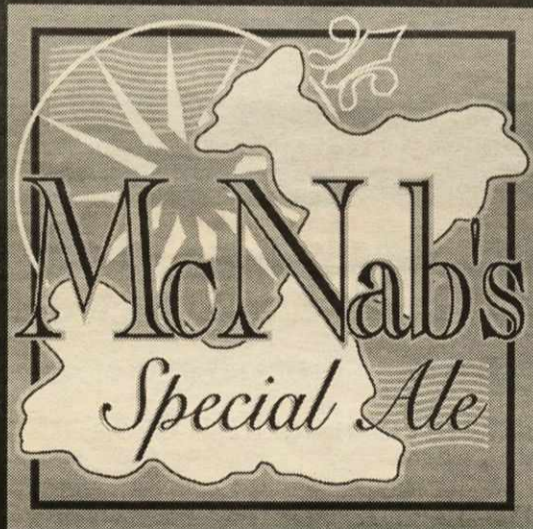
At the University of Manitoba, the financial aid and awards office phoned 200 students receiving student loans to let them know about the review, says Nancy Alrudha, out-of-province coordinator.

"Most of the students who were interested came in and filled out the form right away," says Alrudha, adding that some of the payment slips have already been received.

"As far as I'm concerned, I think the whole thing from the beginning was unfair. What struck everyone about the unfairness is that most people had already budgeted for the year. For single parents, it was particularly hard. What a mess," says Alrudha.

Helmut Zisser, director of the student support at the ministry of education, blames a computer error for incorrectly calculating the original assessments.

"It's never normal for us to make mistakes, and if we do make mistakes, we certainly try to be up front about it."



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