

# Students pitch in to raise money for APEC protesters

BY SONIA VERMA

MONTREAL (CUP) — Frustrated by Ottawa's refusal to pay for the legal fees of complainants at the APEC inquiry, students across the country are mobilizing to raise the money themselves.

McGill University's student council was one of the first to establish a campus fundraising campaign in support of the complainants, most of whom are University of British Columbia students who were arrested while protesting at last November's APEC summit in Vancouver.

The effort has already raised almost \$1,000 through student donations.

Students at McGill are also circulating a petition demanding Solicitor General Andy Scott approve government funding for the students' legal costs.

"There is a growing recognition that this isn't just about UBC students anymore," said Jeff Feiner, vice-president external of the Students' Society of McGill University.

"There's still division over the methods of protest, but its fading into the background because of the greater evil committed by the police force and by political leaders themselves.

"There seems to be a

recognition that being able to afford adequate legal representation is far more important than whether some people may have crossed the line," he said.

Ottawa is paying for legal counsel for the RCMP officers at the inquiry, which is investigating their actions at the meeting of 18 Pacific Rim leaders. Dozens of students protesting the event were pepper-sprayed, arrested without charge, detained and told to remove their banners.

Scott says the complainants, unlike the RCMP, have nothing to lose from the inquiry and therefore don't deserve federal dollars. He has twice refused to cover their fees, even though the RCMP Public Complaints Commission urged him to.

But lawyers for the complainants say a fair inquiry is impossible unless their clients have access to full legal counsel.

It's estimated the total cost for the students' legal fees will exceed the \$200,000 originally estimated. The British Columbia Federation of Labour has collected more than \$80,000 toward the bill, mostly through private donors.

Student groups are helping in the fundraising effort. The Canadian Federation of Students donated \$2,000 to the APEC protesters at the inquiry.

But Jennifer Story, deputy chair of the organization, says that probably won't go very far. "It's become clear that the inquiry process will cost more, and take a

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lot longer than originally expected," she said.

The student lobby group is in the midst of producing campaign-style buttons that will be sold on campuses across the country, with profits going toward offsetting the legal fees for the UBC students.

"We're trying to send a message that public outcry has got to be backed by financial support," Story said.

And students at the University of Guelph have asked the school to donate \$10,000 toward the complainants' legal fees.

Vivian Hoffman, president of the UBC Alma Mater Society, has also been trying to raise financial support for the students through an aggressive e-mail campaign.

Last week, in conjunction with Queen's University, Hoffman sent e-mails to every university student council and campus newspaper across the country requesting support for the protesters.

"The e-mail will ask people to help raise funds and awareness on each campus," she said. "We're asking student councils to make donations and newspapers to donate ad space to let people know how they can help.

"Hopefully this will send a stronger message than just one university or just one national student group."

Hoffman has reason to be optimistic her campaign will prove successful. In the last two weeks, she's been contacted by student groups at Queen's University, the University of Alberta and McMaster University, all expressing a desire to help the APEC protesters.

She hopes the campaign will harness that support and translate it into financial backing.

As of last Wednesday,

students were able to make a donation to the APEC Protesters Legal Fund at any Toronto Dominion Bank branch.

Hoffman points out her campaign to raise student donations may have some troubling consequences.

"It's still students who are being forced to raise the money for themselves. Students, whether they're from UBC or McGill, are obviously not the ones best able to afford it," she said.

But she says it's the best course of action given the circumstances.

"There's a huge imbalance and we disagree with how the situation has progressed, but we asked the federal government to provide funding and they have rejected that request. We have to deal with that."

Meanwhile, organizers say if Scott changes his mind and decides to fund the protesters, the money will go toward other related legal costs including the civil suits filed by various students against the RCMP.

## Students call for help for protesters

BY SARAH SIMS

GUELPH (CUP) — Students at the University of Guelph have asked the school to donate \$10,000 toward the legal expenses raked up by complainants before the APEC inquiry in Vancouver.

The College of Arts' Student Union made the request in an open letter to university President Mordechai Rozanski.

Stephen Wicary, chairman of the student union, says the issues raised by the APEC controversy are important.

"The heart of the matter is academic freedom and the right to

protest," he said. "[It's] not a matter of agreeing with the protest, it's just a matter of agreeing that the protest had a right to take place."

Wicary adds the University of British Columbia students — who were pepper-sprayed by RCMP

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officers while protesting the Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation meeting — continue to be violated by the fact Ottawa refuses to foot their legal bills.

The request has been met with considerable support from other U of G students and faculty.

The Student Senate Caucus has endorsed Wicary's letter and is planning to write a letter of their own.

The College of Social Science Student Government is also planning to join the call for a U of G donation.

A donation from the university would be "an admirable gesture and an important gesture," said English Prof. Michael Keefer.

But despite considerable support for the plan to donate money to the APEC protesters, the university has not yet responded to Wicary's letter.

Rozanski was unavailable for comment.

In the meantime, Wicary plans to meet with Rozanski to further discuss the prospect of financial aid for the complainants.

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