

Presidential Candidates

Kate Collins



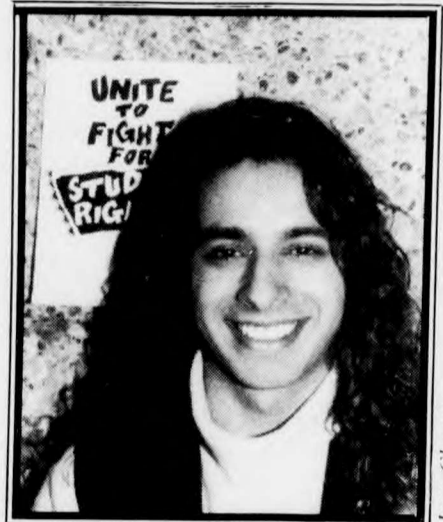
Joan Clement

Joseph DeMattei



Joan Clement

Jean Ghomeshi



Joan Clement

EXCAL: What are the three biggest issues on campus?

COLLINS: I think the transition outlined in *The White Paper* for student governments, which has happened at the beginning of last year and this year, really hasn't been finished yet. I think the biggest problem facing colleges is going to be dealing with the affiliation of clubs, learning how to redistribute their finances and learning to deal with each other together and not compete. Colleges think it is going to mean competition. But if it means competition then it is going to mean a division of power and hostility and we don't need anymore of that.

I also think, after the last council meeting, the role of fraternities is going to be pretty big this year. I had sort of hoped to stay away from that during this campaign because it is sort of a negative tactic to have to bring up. I had thought that it was perfectly reasonable for a fraternity member to be a student politician and be able to do both jobs well. You can't say that a fraternity is bad as it is, unless you disagree with their whole ethical stance, which I might personally. But from the point of view of being allowed to do your own thing on campus, you can't disregard their wishes.

On the other hand, when it comes to a choice between fulfilling your mandate as an elected representative for maybe 25,000 arts students or furthering the goals of your fraternity, for me, you have to take the first one. If you are being seen as taking the second one, then you discredit everything that you stand for. And that is happening on campus now.

Fraternities have moved their way into power on college councils and in clubs and in the CYSF to the extent that most of the executive is taken over by fraternities. Although you don't notice them, they are working in the background. When what they are doing for fraternities does come up, it effectively puts a damper on anything else. They just move in and squash things. They count on the apathy of students. They are a committed voter block that can guarantee that 300 people will be behind them in everything. When the fraternity question came up at the CYSF, the fraternities packed the Senate Chamber, they were all wearing their Greek t-shirts and banging on tables. It's like facing a mob. Most York students don't have that kind of bond with people to such a great extent and I think they are helpless.

It is time for students to realize when they are voting from now on, that they have to figure out if their candidate has some kind of political connection or some kind of fraternity connection. And, if they do, are they happy putting that person into a position where they might favour their fraternity over their job on CYSF?

I don't think that the university, either student government or administration, should be recognizing fraternities or sororities because I don't think they support the values the university stands for: accessibility to people of different racial and sexual and financial groups. Fraternities are an elitism of affluence. It's for those who can afford to pay to join, it may be an effective way of making contacts for the business world and it may be a way to make yourself feel at home in a large environment, and people always have that choice. But people can do that on their own and not involve the sanction of student governments. The fraternities would not have come forward with that request (to be recognized) unless they wanted something from it. And people seem to pass that off. The fraternities wanted something and they got it. They've been condoned, they've been told they are okay. And, in the future, who is to say they won't ask for money? They'll say we're the only club who doesn't get money and that's unfair, 10 years down the road.

Even if the CYSF executive has fraternity members on it that I must work with, the CYSF has to work as a team. You

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EXCAL: What are the three biggest issues on campus?

DEMATTEIS: The Ontario Federation of Students (OFS), the abortion referendum and the Women's Centre.

The OFS is a decision left unanswered by this year's CYSF. They did not ignore it but they should have made some kind of decision on it. I believe in the concept of the OFS and it works as a good lobbying group for all students across Ontario. But, we should ask the students of York, in a referendum, if they are willing to pay the extra money to rejoin OFS.

The referendum on abortion is talked about a lot on campus. I don't believe there should be a referendum because it is a very personal issue and I don't believe we can make a decision as a group. I think we would just be wasting money we could use for an OFS referendum or other services that need our immediate attention.

The CYSF can address issues like this but it shouldn't take a stand as a group. The CYSF is a representative of the students and it should take into consideration what the students think. I don't think the CYSF, as a whole, should take a stance on things of personal importance.

I think the Women's Centre is a good thing. It provides good service for all York University. Its main problem has been funding. That's definitely something that has to be looked into. It's a problem that should be resolved as soon as possible.

My immediate plan would be to look into what they want. They are asking for money but it isn't clear what they are using it for. I have a few questions I would like to ask them but, nonetheless, I feel they deserve to be funded. They have not received any money yet from the present CYSF.

EXCAL: What are your feelings regarding the changes to student government that are in the White Paper?

DEMATTEIS: *The White Paper* will be interesting this following year because the transition period of the paper comes into effect. I was looking over it and I think the changes made by the administration are fundamentally okay. There are four sections I agree with but there is a third section on finances that I do have problems with. I think the student levy should be left to the actual council to decide how much of that money it should be getting, not the administration, as stated in *The White Paper*.

We are forced to work with a budget. We could have a lot more money to provide a lot more services but we can't because of the restraints put in section C of *The White Paper*. I believe that section needs rewording.

The fact the administration decides how much money we get needs to be reworked. Students should be able to decide, or at least have a significant input, into how much money we think we should get and if we should charge more for tuition fees.

I think *The White Paper* is really a good thing. It has been very controversial in this year's council and I can't understand why. I agree with it as a whole.

EXCAL: What are your specific plans for combatting underfunding and rising tuition fees?

DEMATTEIS: We can demonstrate and put pressure on the Ontario government but, unfortunately, that's all we can do. We can put pressure on provincial treasurer Bob Nixon to put pressure on the federal government. We can lobby, we can go out and demonstrate at Queen's Park to show that we are upset.

I think the press conference that we had last week to protest the budget was very good and to the point. The media coverage was good for the school.

Besides rallying and getting a petition, we must keep at it just like they did with Michael Wilson's first budget

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EXCAL: What are the three biggest issues on campus?

GHOMESHI: I would have to say that tuition is an extremely big issue. We have a situation at this university, like at other universities, where we are in a financial crisis created not by students not paying high enough fees, but by a decrease in operating grants and a decrease in the percentage of the provincial budget going to universities.

One thing that really worries me is that we have a situation where there are certain people in Ontario arguing that what we need is deregulation of tuition or an increase of tuition fees to meet this financial crisis. That's a problem because tuition fees are directly related to the accessibility of universities.

The reason accessibility is an issue is because of the Queen's *Blueprint for Action*. We had members of the CYSF executive this year who supported the document and that was outrageous. They were walking around this institution saying, 'This shouldn't be privatized and we need to go back to education,' and I'm supposed to believe them after they supported the *Blueprint*?

We have to come out against the *Blueprint* and, frankly, I don't have any ludicrous notions that York can handle underfunding by itself. I do think that uniting with other universities is a possibility. I believe that 200,000 students in Ontario, or 400,000 across the country, are more powerful than a letter from the CYSF stating, "We are sorry about this recent budget cut."

The second point I want to address is sexism. First of all, we are on a campus where the first Women's Centre in the country was established and we are at the educational forefront with our Women's Studies programmes. York has a reputation for being very progressive in this way but it's clearly not mirrored by the administration in terms of the curriculum, and it's clearly not mirrored by the student government. This is a problem.

Sexism is an issue that should be addressed by student government more than ever, considering this year's atrocities at Ecole Polytechnique and the "No Means Harder" campaign at Queen's University. It's outrageous for me to listen to the kind of things that have been going on with York's Women's Centre. People are making arguments like, 'If we have a Women's Centre, why don't we have a Men's Centre?'

I have to stress that women's issues are something I've been involved in for awhile and that's why it's an issue for me. I was a Women Studies minor for the first two years I was here, it opened me up to a lot of things.

The third big issue is clubs. I fancy myself a "non-establishment" candidate. There are two establishments at York: the "administration establishment" which we all rally against and the "student government" establishment. What the student government establishment does is breed itself. It comes out of college councils and people become vice-presidents and then they become presidents and there is a great deal of centralized power. This centralized power could be further compounded by things like the CYSF president and board of governor being the same person.

I come from the club scene at York and I have been involved in student government. I come from a certain area of the university that is a bit apathetic about central student government. Because people emerge out of college government, there is already a bias that goes into CYSF. One of the reasons electing me would be a good thing for clubs would be because I empathize with being in a bankrupt club that is trying to recruit people. I lived that table experience.

I call for a representative clubs coalition. This doesn't necessarily need to be a part of the government structure of the CYSF but it's tied to the government structure. What it is, essentially, is to say, "Look, no matter who gets elected at CYSF, these people can not accurately reflect Catholic stu-

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