Dining at Dal

Three new food franchises hit campus

BY BRANDON BUTLER AND GINA STACK

Dalhousie students now have more choices than ever when it comes to eating out on campus. However, the increased competition may be harmful to some of the businesses already in place.

The University has signed a series of franchise agreements that will take effect this school year. New franchises will join existing outlets like Robin's Donuts in the Life Sciences Centre (LSC).

Dalhousie Vice-President Student Services Eric McKee said that the new corporate presence is related in large part to the on-campus demand, and not to any financial pressures Dalhousie might be experiencing due to government cutbacks in funding.

Working through Cara Management Services, Dalhousie has begun setting up new areas for having beverages and meals. These include the new Harvey's that recently opened in the LSC, a Second Cup that will be opening in the Killiam Library's new atrium and a Tim Horton's in the Tupper Medical building.

Cara Management Services and Beaver Foods hold a monopoly over food services on campus through their parent company Cara Operations. Cara has a policy of paying all employees above minimum wage. This has already resulted in higher prices at the Pizza Hut located in the DSU, but Dalhousie Food Services Director Leesa Franklin said that prices at the new outlets will be identical to those at other outlets off-campus.

Jan Morel is director of food services for the Dalhousie Student Union (DSU). She welcomes the new outlets to campus.

"There will be competition, but it will be friendly. There is enough business out there that would support all of the new foodservices industries."

DSU president Brad MacKay was not quite as enthusiastic.

"The increased competition is great," said MacKay. "There will be lots of alternatives for students. Harvey's was needed for people in the LSC, but I have mixed feelings about the Second Cup. I recognize that it is a good service for students, but it may defeat the purpose of the Grad House and Robin's Donuts."

MacKay believes the campus cannot hold any more food outlets.

"The campus is now saturated. If we go past saturation these businesses will have less volume and that would be reflected in prices which affects students' finances."

The DSU has a profit sharing agreement with the food services located in its building. The union receives four and a half to five per cent of the businesses' profits. DSU treasurer Michael Murphy said the money becomes part of the general operating budget of the DSU.

Dalhousie administration was not so forth coming with where their profits will be spent. Head of Dalhousie Ancillary Projects Dave Ness refused to comment on any financial matters pertaining to the university's contracts with Cara Management.

"Students have to eat and we have to try to support what they want on campus," Ness said.

Although the exact cost of bringing these new facilities to campus is confidential, the University expects to have the outlets fully paid for in five to seven years, after which an overall profit may be turned.

"Our mandate is to take a 'break-even' stance," McKee said.

Ness said the decisions to put these facilities on-campus is the result of a process that began back in 1992.

At that time, Dalhousie administration began a review of its food service department. A student and faculty survey was conducted by Corporate Research Services in 1994.

"The survey showed that those on campus wanted more 'branded concepts'," said McKee.

"People generally do not want a generic hamburger, but rather one with a name brand."

Since 1994, the University's Food Service Department and Administration has responded to the survey by building franchise outlets.

NSPIRG cleans up bylaws

BY ANTHONY SKELTON

In a seemingly interminable annual general meeting on September 25, the Nova Scotia Public Interest and Research Group (NSPIRG) succeeded in ratifying several existing bylaws of minor significance.

"These are not radical changes," said discussion facilitator Satya Ramen.

Ramen said that the overriding concern in augmenting the bylaws was to make them more consistent, clear and conducive to future decision making.

The bylaw change which proved to be the most intractable pertained to NSPIRG's hiring procedure for full time employees.

NSPIRG legislation stated that once a full time employee's one year term ends, the employee is required to reapply and undergo the hiring procedure again if they wish to seek reappointment. Under the changed bylaw, the full time employee is able to renew their contract without having to reapply and go through the interview stage for a second time.

Consensus on this issue proved difficult when some NSPIRG members said that the bylaw change would preclude others from obtaining the position, and hence be unfair to people who desired the position.

Others argued that the renewal would be beneficial because it would be conducive to organizational consistency and productivity.

"It makes sense to rehire the past employee if they have successfully completed the job," argued discussion facilitator Wayne Groszko.

"This proposed change makes it less of a hassle to rehire that person."

After much debate the new bylaw was ratified with the condition that a philosophical statement be inserted at the commencement of the bylaw document. The statement read that NSPIRG would attempt to hire students for short-term positions as well as consistently aim at organizational continuity.

Other bylaws for augmentation pertained to the way in which bylaws themselves were to be changed, and the way board of directors were to be elected. These bylaws were changed because they sent conflicting messages about how the changes and voting procedures were themselves to take place.

"We want to make it clear in the bylaws how changes are to take place and how elections for board members are to take place," said Groszko.