

# Commerce students vote for tuition hike

BY SARAH GALASHAN

VANCOUVER (CUP) — Undergraduate commerce students at the University of British Columbia voted in favour of a \$250 increase in their tuition last week.

The proposed fee hike was put to a referendum after students raised concern that UBC's business program isn't as competitive as programs at other Canadian schools.

"At Queen's [University] students are plugging in their laptops in their classrooms and

voted to pay for the tuition fee increase.

The new fee will be

university's board of governors.

"We're assuming it will go through at this point," said Byron Hender, of the office of the vice-president of student and academic services.

Some student leaders are worried commerce students may be sending the wrong message to the province that all UBC students are willing to pay higher tuition.

"Unfortunately, there are students who can't pay for it and are not willing to pay for it," said Nathan Allen, external affairs coordinator with UBC's main student union, the Alma Mater Society.

"It sort of subverts what we are working towards. This definitely hurts our efforts in trying to push for [a continued tuition freeze]," Allen said.

While the commerce program may be cash-strapped, he added, additional funds shouldn't come at the expense of students.

## High School students back striking staff

BY CARLA TONELLI

TORONTO (CUP) — As support staff at Toronto's public schools head into their third week on strike, a growing number of students are trading in their textbooks for pickets in a show of support for the employees.

The staff members who run operations for the Toronto District School Board, including caretakers, administrative assistants, lunch supervisors and special-needs workers, have been on strike since Feb. 27. Negotiations between the Canadian Union of Public Employees, which represents the workers, and the board are ongoing.

The workers are pushing for a wage increase and other contract improvements. They also oppose the provincial government's proposed changes to Ontario's education system that would see 4,358 education-worker jobs eliminated by 2002 and a wage rollback after 8.5 years of a pay freeze.

So far, at least 20 schools across the city have been shut down as a result of the strike, while other schools are feeling its effects as washrooms go uncleaned and concerned parents pull their kids out of class.

Increasingly, high-school students are throwing their support behind the strikers. Last week, about 150 students demonstrated in front of the board of education's downtown offices to protest its role in implementing the changes.

"It's important for the board to know that students are behind support staff," said Mika Lior, a Grade 12 student in Toronto's west-end.

"It's ridiculous that the board and the province are saying they are putting students first. We're the students and we support support staff, so why don't they put that concern first?"

Grade Nine student Simone Swail agreed. "The Mike Harris government keeps trying to cut us back," she said "It's just getting worse and worse."

Many students drew connections between rising university tuition fees in Ontario and the support-staff strike.

"Our moms and dads need a decent fair wage so they can afford to send us [to university]," said Simon Turnbull, a Grade 12 student whose mother is one of the CUPE employees on strike.

Earl Manners, president of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation, says the presence of students and teachers on the picket lines shows the public that the entire education system is at risk.

He also condemned the Progressive Conservative government's emphasis on improving classroom experience at the expense of support staff.

"This strike proves the whole school is a classroom," Manners said. "We believe in an educational team, and it takes a whole team to provide a good education."

But the government insists

changes to support staff levels are necessary to maintain the quality of education.

"Everything that's being done is with the goal of putting more money in the classroom," said Rob Savage, press secretary for Education Minister Dave Johnson.

"I think we recognize that support staff are important — we believe it's better to concentrate our dollars on teachers and resources than unnecessary administration," he added.

**"This definitely hurts our efforts in trying to push for [a continued tuition freeze]."**

that's how they learn," said Irhan Rawji, a representative for the university's Commerce Undergraduate Society.

"That's the leading edge and that's what [commerce] wants to see and that's how you get jobs."

Bright orange signs posted throughout UBC's commerce building last week read: "The tuition freeze is killing our quality of education. It's time we do something to change that fact!"

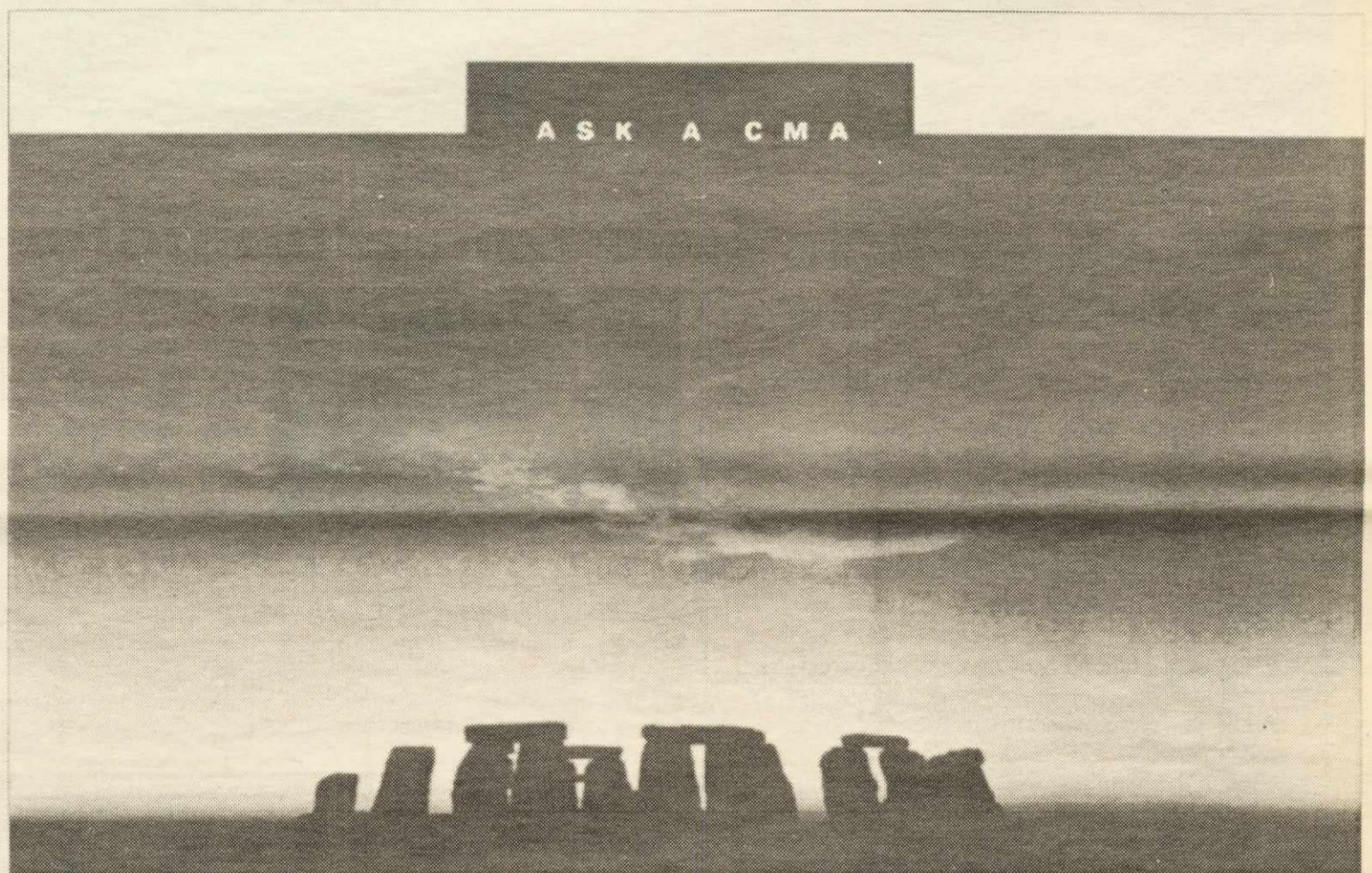
Slightly more than 20 percent of eligible voters took part in the two-day referendum that was sponsored by the Commerce Undergraduate Society. 62 percent

channelled through the Commerce Undergraduate Society, which plans to use the new funds to improve student space, add employees to its career centre and increase the number of computers.

The additions are necessary to make the program competitive with other Canadian schools, said Rawji.

"It's to improve our profile. It's to improve our reputation, to allow students to have further academic opportunities that they can't afford right now," he said.

The fee increase will appear in next year's course calendar with the stipulation that it must first receive approval from the



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