

Canadians lose their virginity early

But sex education remains inadequate, international survey says

BY ANDREA BREAU

WINNIPEG (CUP) - Young people are learning about sex from their peers, books and sexual partners instead of from school programs and parents, an international study says.

Commissioned by condom manufacturer Durex Canada, the study looked at sex attitudes and behaviour among nearly 10,000 youth over the age of 16 in 14 countries.

"[The survey tells us that] kids are learning about sex from their peers, which can lead to misconceptions and ignorance about safe sex and prevention of disease," said Sonya Agnew,

director of marketing for Durex.

Only 14 percent of those surveyed cited their parents as their primary source while 24 per cent said they'd like them to be.

The survey, which was administered by independent research consultants, also indicates that, globally, one in four youth have had sex before age 16. In Canada, the survey found the average age teens first have sex is 16.6 years, a year earlier than the global average of 17.6 years.

"With Canadians experiencing sex for the first time at a relatively young age, the need for parental influence and organized sex education programs in schools early on becomes increasingly important," said Agnew.

Several students echoed the findings of the survey.

Ruth Roberts, a University of Winnipeg student who used to volunteer at a community centre, says she often saw 13 year olds coming in with questions about sex and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).

"By that example, I'd say education is less than adequate," she said.

Darren Kramble, a graduate student at the University of Manitoba, says his formal sex education was minimal.

"By the time they taught us [sex education] in school, we'd already learned it all," he said.

"My school was expecting the parents to teach us, and the parents

were expecting the school to teach us. They both missed out on an important opportunity."

Dr. Patricia Mirwaldt, an associate dean with the faculty of Medicine at the University of Manitoba, says schools need to improve their sex and STD education programs.

"My sense [is that] people are asking a lot of questions, and I wouldn't gauge this as being that they're ignorant about [sex], but at least an understanding that they have a gap of knowledge," said Mirwaldt, who helps run a campus program that allows students to ask sex-related questions on bathroom stalls.

Mirwaldt isn't the only one who thinks there should be more

sex education in schools. Of the people surveyed by Durex, 83 per cent said sex education should begin before the age of 14.

But Mirwaldt says it should start at a younger age.

"I think [sex education] should begin as soon as kids begin thinking and talking about sex, and I think that happens well before the age of 14," she said.

Other findings of the survey state that Canadians are among the most faithful lovers in the world, ranking fifth — with only 34 percent admitting to having more than one sexual relationship at a time. Americans were found to be the most unfaithful — half of that country's respondents admitting to cheating on partners.

The survey also placed Canadians second for sexual stamina, making love for 22.7 minutes on average. Americans outlasted us in that category with an average of 28.1 minutes.

Student union to appeal Quebec's differential policy

BY SONIA VERMA

MONTREAL (CUP) — McGill's undergraduate students' society has hired controversial lawyer Guy Bertrand to appeal last February's Quebec Superior Court decision upholding the province's differential tuition fee policy.

Bertrand is best known for his role in the recent Supreme Court case which centred on Quebec's unilateral right to separate from Canada.

The decision to hire the Quebec City lawyer has raised concerns among some students that the case will shift away from the issue of accessible education and toward Canada-Quebec relations.

The two year old fee structure effectively doubles tuition at Quebec universities and colleges for out-of-province students. Students from Quebec continue to

enjoy a tuition freeze.

"I was very surprised and disappointed with the decision," said Louis Messier, francophone commissioner with McGill's students' society. "I think the last thing students at McGill want is to get involved in a battle between Quebec and Ottawa."

Messier says he's worried Bertrand will misconstrue the differential fee policy as an "expression of Quebec isolationism." He says the real issue is a financial one.

As federal transfer payments drop, differential tuition fees are being considered by a number of provinces, including British Columbia and Alberta.

"By turning this into a federalist argument, the case becomes less relevant to students in BC who may be facing tuition hikes," he said.

In its original challenge to

differential fees, Andre Durocher, the group's former lawyer, argued the policy contravened the Charter of Rights and Freedoms by restricting the mobility of students pursuing post-secondary education.

Durocher also argued the policy violated the Quebec Education Act which prohibits discrimination.

In his Feb. 11 decision, Judge Claude Tellier ruled firmly in favour of the Parti Quebecois government, finding that an increase in tuition for out-of-province students doesn't pose a significant barrier to Canadian students' mobility.

He also ruled the fees don't violate the Charter, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of nationality or ethnicity but not provincial origin.

It's expected that Bertrand will try a different approach, emphasizing Quebec's

responsibility to act as a province of Canada and the primacy of constitutional responsibilities.

"As Quebecers, our lives have to be based on the principle of federalism. Quebec needs to respect the authority of its citizens, and that means respecting citizens from another province," said Bertrand.

He says the province's decision to implement differential fees was motivated by nationalism.

"For 30 years the nationalists of Quebec have been trying to say there is no such thing as a Canadian in Quebec, there are only Quebec people. They're trying to introduce legislation so that we are *de facto* not Canadian," he said.

Paul Ruel, the named plaintiff in the case, questions Bertrand's approach, wondering if it will divide students along linguistic lines.

"He has always focused on national unity and linguistic issues, but there's too much more to it than that and the case seems to be getting away from issues like discrimination and accessibility," he said.

The students' society hired Bertrand for \$20,000 after Durocher failed to file the necessary paperwork for an appeal as the deadline approached.

But both Bertrand and student councillor Jeffrey Feiner expect the cost of the case to exceed that, anticipating it will proceed to the Supreme Court of Canada.

It is hoped a private fundraiser will be able to cover the additional costs.

A court date for the appeal will be announced Oct. 15.

APEC protestor names Chretien, others in class-action suit

BY SARAH GALASHAN

VANCOUVER (CUP) — A law student who was arrested at last year's Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation summit has launched a class-action suit against prime minister Jean Chretien, Finance minister Lloyd Axworthy and former ambassador to Indonesia Gary Smith.

The suit, which was announced by University of British Columbia student Craig Jones last Tuesday, alleges the three officials conspired to limit the constitutional rights of protesters during the meeting of 18 Pacific Rim leaders.

According to Jones' statement of claim, any other interested parties who choose to join the class-action lawsuit may do so.

"What it allows us to do really is to roll up a whole bunch of different actions that otherwise wouldn't be able to proceed on their own," Jones said.

Jones was arrested for refusing to remove a protest sign during the Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation (APEC) conference held at the University of British Columbia last November. The RCMP arrested 49 people at the meeting.

He says he decided to launch the suit after documents surfaced that suggest Ottawa ordered the

RCMP to limit protests at the summit to avoid embarrassment to then-Indonesian president Suharto.

Although it may take years before the lawsuit is heard, Jones says it was necessary to pursue it because the RCMP complaints commission, which is investigating security measures at the summit, has no legal jurisdiction.

"There's no robust means of redress in this hearing. They can make recommendations to the police commissioner and that's it. What good is that going to do against the PM or Axworthy or any of the rest?" Jones said.

Portions of a recently released email from Robert Vanderloo,

executive director of the APEC co-ordinating office, implicate the Prime Minister's Office in the handling of student protesters at the summit.

"PMO has expressed concerns about the security perimeter at UBC, not so much from a security point of view, but to avoid embarrassment to APEC leaders," the September 1997 email reads.

"We have to find a balance that meets both concerns... we do not wish student demonstrations and efforts by the government to suppress the freedom of expression to become a major media story..." the email states.



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