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## School doors closing

### The decline in foreign students

By CHRISTINE L. GOMES

According to a recent report by the Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE), the foreign undergraduate student in Canada may become extinct in the coming years if the trend set by universities in the last five years is to continue.

Statistics gathered by CBIE show that while enrolment in graduate programmes is slightly increased, the amount of foreign students attending post-secondary institutions in Canada has decreased by 15% in the last year. The statistics for Ontario indicate that over the past five years there has been a decrease of 40%.

Brenda Hanning, the Foreign Student Advisor in the Office of Student Affairs, is on the board of CBIE and co-chaired its Annual Conference in Quebec City from October 31 to November 3. In her summation of the conference she notes, "At York, preliminary figures indicate a drop in numbers (of foreign students) from 1838 to 1548 between last year and this year," which is slightly higher than a 15% decrease.

Facing the lowest intake figures in the past five years, the two major areas of concern addressed by the conference are the Canada Employment and Immigration regulations and the differential fees for foreign students.

In regard to the Employment and Immigration regulations, recommendations were made and CBIE anticipates an announcement from the Hon. Benoit Bouchard, Minister of Employment and Immigration, to be forthcoming. His statement is expected to contain a decision on the "easing of employment rules affecting foreign students." This may include (a) allowing students to work on campus, (b) allowing students a 12-month grace period after graduation to obtain employment related to their training, and (c) allowing spouses of students to seek employment. Other recommendations on the federal level, which were approved in principle at the conference, are accelerated processing time for authorizations, the issuing of multiple visas and a consistency in

the application of regulations to foreign students.

Consistency, the CBIE report states, is a big problem because "Although Canada opened its doors to students from all countries (in 1986-87), the size of the opening seemed to be related to the GNP per capita of the country sending the students. The richer the country, the more students were admitted to Canada." This problem was addressed at the conference and a recommendation was made "to focus resources on the training of qualified students from the least developed countries, with particular emphasis on women." In a local context, Hanning contends that "York doesn't currently have a formal policy statement on foreign students, although it has always said that it was accessible to all qualified applicants. So there was no question of quotas or restrictions at York, ever."

Restrictions, though, also come in the form of differential fees. While domestic students pay approximately \$1,500.00 for tuition, a foreign student might have to deal with a tuition fee that is sometimes more than double or triple this amount. While differential fees do not exist in Manitoba, Newfoundland and British Columbia, the majority of foreign students attend post-secondary institutions in Ontario and Quebec, where the differential is even higher than in this province. The conference proposed recommendations on differential fees aimed at the provincial and institutional levels which included (a) to refrain from increasing fees any further, (b) possible reductions in the differential itself, and (c) the expansion of the number and categories of exemptions.

It is the CBIE's hope that through the implementation of these recommendations they will "be a part of the momentum that is leading toward the formulation of policies this momentum, perhaps, which can save the undergraduate foreign student from becoming an endangered species.

## Meech Lake will cede provincial powers

By MARK HUNTER

The Meech Lake Accord, if ratified by the provinces of Canada, will be "an abandonment by the provincial governments of jurisdiction over policy in areas such as post-secondary education," says Howard Epstein, Executive Director for the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations, (OCUFA).

In an article published in November's OCUFA Forum, Epstein expressed his reservations about the accord. The accord, says Epstein "removes any doubt that the federal government can legislate in areas that otherwise would be areas of provincial jurisdiction."

Epstein also noted that "the accord's thrust is aimed towards an increase in provincial power" and stressed that OCUFA does not oppose the entire accord, but parts of it, most notably the Section 106a amendment.

The two-part amendment states that "The government of Canada shall provide reasonable compensation to the government of a province that chooses not to participate in a national share-cost programme . . . (provided) the province carries on a programme or initiative compatible with the national objectives." According to Epstein, what this means is that funding will be available, but on the federal government's terms.

Supporters of the Meech Lake Accord argue that Section 106a does not apply to Canada's post-secondary institutions, but Epstein insists that OCUFA believes the

amendment will include universities and has the power to terminate the existing Established Programme Financing Act of 1977, under which federal funds are transferred to the provinces. This transfer of money to provincial control is vital, because according to Epstein, in Canada 100% of the degree granting institutions are publicly funded, as compared with 50% in the US.

University funding is something that traditionally has been under the "exclusive jurisdiction of the provinces," Epstein said, adding that if the accord is ratified we could see universities being forced to follow "national objectives" set by a "single, decision making body in Ottawa." Epstein fears that this will not only reduce the role of the provinces in developing university programmes, but it will also deprive the university itself of the ability to shape and control its own development and direction.

Epstein sees the accord creating the potential for the federal government to dictate to the universities and implement "targetted research" programmes. In Epstein's view, if the accord becomes law "there will be an increased attempt (by the government) to direct research and . . . to centrally plan for the labour market."

Epstein also noted that abolishment of the Section 106a amendment is not necessarily the answer, and that he would be interested in seeing a "restructuring" of the amendment stipulating that educational facilities are excluded.