

McGill to weigh the option of privatization

BY SONIA VERMA

MONTREAL (CUP) — A radical proposal to privatize McGill University by raising tuition fees to \$10,000 and slashing enrollment was among options discussed by the university's highest governing body to deal with their growing deficit.

Discussions at the Board of Governors' meeting later this month will serve as a follow up to a meeting where McGill principal, Bernard Shapiro presented a report that sparked much debate over the university's

fiscal future.

Shapiro presented four options in an attempt to wrestle down McGill's accumulated operating deficit of over \$60-million while generating revenue in the face of a province-wide tuition freeze.

Included among Shapiro's strategies are the lowering of admission standards, bringing in more students, and the reduction of expenses by allowing staff, professors and student resources to deplete.

But it is Shapiro's last two suggestions which have sparked the most controversy.

One strategy involves

increasing revenue through a substantial tuition hike that would bring it up to the national average of \$3,200 and expanding McGill's \$500-million endowment fund to sustain faculty levels and secure resources.

Under another option, 5,000 students would pay \$10,000 a year to attend a privately-funded university.

There are approximately 30,000 students currently attending McGill.

Pierre Belanger, vice-principal of research and graduate studies, says there is definitely a positive

side to privatization.

"The advantages are very clear," he said. "It gets you away from the government's funding...[since they] can turn the tap on and off at will."

But Shapiro says that, for now, privatization isn't a reasonable goal.

"The notion itself could be imagined. The

question is, is it suitable or is it possible," he said. "My sense is that it would be too much of a break from the status quo."

This is not the first time the president has put a proposal for McGill's privatization on the table for discussion.

In September 1995, he released a discussion paper on the university's future which included a 25-point restructuring plan. The plan called for "substantially higher tuition fees," lower enrollment and "a more decentralized McGill in which only faculties capable of generating the revenues required to sustain them would be supported."

That sparked students to issue a response in their own discussion paper.

In it, they argued that academic innovation, accessibility, and curriculum diversity are integral to a high-quality education. These would all be severely jeopardized in a private setting, the report stated.

Shapiro acknowledges that the present option to privatize is

closely modeled after his earlier model, adding that vigorous opposition leveled two years ago makes the option unlikely.

But Matthew Bergbusch, president of McGill's graduate student union, says there is an alarming trend in the administration's response to collapsing

provincial grants — a consistent move towards privatization in the face of student opposition.

"The situation is dealt with by the administration where excellence is defined as the capacity to be economically self-supporting," he said. "We would maintain that a university that is not diverse or accessible is not an excellent university. A university where tuition fees rise is not an excellent university."

Bergbusch says he is also critical of the option which allows for the substantial tuition increase to \$3,200.

"We are completely opposed to raising tuition fees, even marginally," he said.

Tara Newell, president of the undergraduate student union, agrees.

"We're really being given no option here," she said. "The options are portrayed as being very bleak."

The principal framed the discussion that way and all of the options are about increasing tuition."

"A university where tuition fees rise is not an excellent university"

Memorial fundraising efforts on fire

BY KIP BONNELL

ST. JOHN'S (CUP) — Memorial University is close to reaching the \$25-million target set for its largest fundraising endeavour ever, but it's getting there with the help of what some say is tainted money.

Imasco Ltd. of Canada has given Memorial's Opportunity Fund a gift of \$200,000. The parent company of well-known firms such as Shoppers Drug Mart and Hardee's restaurants, the Imasco business empire also includes Imperial Tobacco, producer of the DuMaurier and Player's cigarette brands.

With a market share of almost two-thirds, Imperial Tobacco is the largest manufacturer of cigarettes and tobacco products in Canada.

And for some people, tobacco money is dirty money.

"We all know the dangers of smoking and we all know what age group the tobacco industry targets — young people," said Eric LeGresley, a member of the Ottawa-based lobby group, Non-Smokers Rights Association.

"By accepting this money, Memorial is contributing to a climate of acceptability of these corporations."

Tobacco companies have been coming under increased public scrutiny in the wake of a number of alarming revelations. On Jan. 16, documents came to the media's attention which revealed that Toronto-based

RJR-Macdonald Inc. commissioned market research on teenagers between 1979 and 1987. And on the Jan. 20 episode of the *Fifth Estate*, it was reported that both RJR-Macdonald and Imperial Tobacco were complicit in the smuggling of cigarettes into Ontario.

Imasco's contribution

to \$50-million.

May says the university is not about to make a "value judgement" when it comes to Imasco's association with the tobacco industry.

"There are many things people have objection to," he said. "Smoking is no different...I don't think I should substitute a personal standard of morality and refuse a sum of money that could do some good."

Imasco has made donations to a number of Canadian universities, ranging from \$500 to \$1.2-million. This has most recently caused concern at the University of Toronto, which has received hundreds of thousands of dollars in donations from the company.

And U of T's president, Robert Prichard, is a member of Imasco's Board of Directors. Medical faculty at the university have called on him in the past to resign his directorship.

The issue of donations from tobacco companies was first raised when Memorial's Opportunity Fund was launched in March of last year.

At that time John Crosbie, Memorial's chancellor, said it didn't matter where any money came from.

"We don't care where the donations come from as long as we get a donation," the former federal cabinet minister said. "Money is money and if there is a donation to be had and somebody wants to make a donation, then I don't see why we wouldn't accept their money."

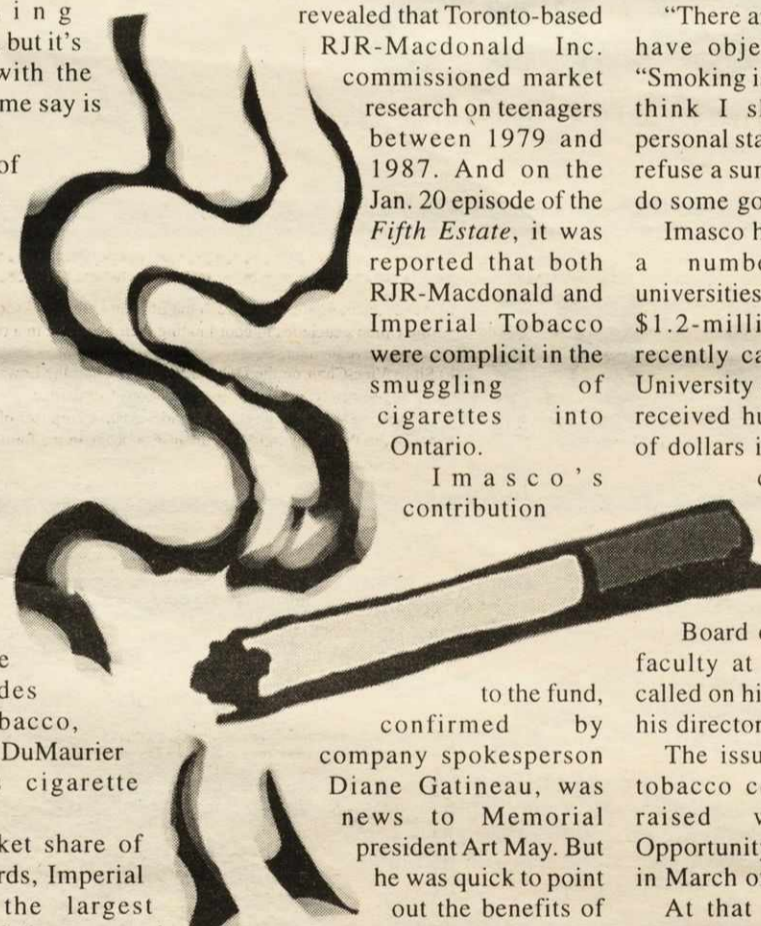
With files from

David Cochrane and the Varsity

to the fund, confirmed by company spokesperson Diane Gatineau, was news to Memorial president Art May. But he was quick to point out the benefits of such a large gift.

"We're glad to have the money," he said. "This means we can put it to use with things like scholarships and academic endowments."

Money from the Opportunity Fund will go towards scholarships, a new student centre and an athletic facility at Memorial. The Newfoundland government has agreed to match all campaign contributions on a dollar-for-dollar basis, which would potentially push the total



Electronic "possession"

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student's account.

"Something happened to make someone trip over it," said Phil Poulas, a systems administrator at the faculty of engineering's computing facilities.

He said staff routinely clear the system's hard drive when it gets filled up.

"They stand out if they have 10 times the amount of memory use."

Under Canada's criminal code, it is legal to view child pornography, but not to possess it. Downloading images off of the Internet onto a hard drive or floppy disk constitutes possession.

Crewe, who also copied the files onto a disk, plead guilty and was granted bail on the condition that he not use computers.

But matters were confounded in mid-December when one of his friends alerted police about eight files she had just found on her computer. Both in violation of his bail terms and against the law, the defendant admitted that he downloaded these child pornographic images in August.

"You have to go search for it," said Sgt. Lorbetskie about the

images from the Child Pedophilia: Boy Sex Internet news group.

It is this lapse over which the judge expressed unease.

"What about August?" the judge asked the defence lawyer pushing against a jail term. "The picture you paint is he's intelligent, curious. Okay, once. But it ought to have been a shock to any intelligent university student who was exploring everything out here."

Still, the defence lawyer emphasized the student's intelligence and downplayed the potential for danger.

"You're dealing here with a 21-year-old, a third-year engineering student," the defence lawyer said, adding that he performed very well on his Christmas exams.

"There is no evidence of any inclination on his part to realize these fantasies," he added, pointing to his medical assessment and biometric test. "There is not sufficient danger to the community, with his promising education, to impose incarceration."

The maximum sentence in a possession case is 18 months.

With files from Sarah Schmidt

February is African Heritage Month

and the Gazette is looking for our readers' help in celebrating the achievements, history, and culture of black people.

The first week in February we will be publishing an African heritage supplement. We welcome all submissions of poetry, photos and feature articles to the supplement.

Call 494-2507 or come to the office, room 312 SUB.

OH SWEETIE, I DO WISH YOU WOULD WRITE MORE OFTEN...