

NEWS

Deadline: Wednesdays at 12:00 Noon. Newsdesk: 453-4983

Problems with student bursaries

by Mark I. Minor

Since January, many students have had problems receiving their student loans and bursaries. For several different reasons, it seems that students have been waiting for long periods of time to get the cash in their hands.

When contacted by the Brunswickan, S.U. Vice President (External) Tammy Yates said that she had not received any complaints from such students but that she would contact the Department of Advanced Education and Labour to check on the matter. After her inquiry she contacted the Bruns and stated that the Provincial Government department had conceded that there indeed had been delays.

Yates said that she had been told that delays in student's receipts of funds arose from two sources. The first problem area results from some internal difficulties in the department. The second was that students had been late in supplying the necessary documentation, including confirmation of summer earnings, which is required in order for funds to be released. The department told Yates that after all proper paperwork was received from students, the average processing period was three to four weeks before actual cash disbursements are made.

Yates was also told that some students who demonstrated immediate need were given special consideration and funds were made available to them.

Upon learning that some students have sought help through UNB administrative channels, the Bruns contacted Sue Wiesner at the Awards Office. Wiesner told the Bruns that she was aware of the students' problems. She said that late funding seemed to be characteristic of most provinces this term. Wiesner attributed part of the problem to a reported increase in the number of appeals made by N.B. students of approximately twenty-five percent. The increase represents extensive additional paperwork which must be handled by already busy staff at Student Aid.

Wiesner added that the advent of the facsimile machine only makes matters worse as students are using this medium to inquire about the status of their loans and bursaries. She said that more paperwork results from faxes because they all must be answered. She told the Bruns that many fax inquiries were being received in her office as well.

When asked about problems with the documentation required from students, Wiesner said that she had had some experience in this area. She said she

thought that some students were unaware of exactly what was required of them. She also said that in some cases employers seemed to be reluctant to provide the information which was being requested by the students. She couldn't pinpoint any specific reason for these employers' hesitations.

Wiesner also told the Bruns that N.B. Student Aid was developing and implementing some innovations in order to make the system more efficient. She commented that one such innovation was the provision of an online system by Student Aid to UNB so that the university can have access to information concerning the status of student loans and bursaries. This system has been in place since September, 1991.

Wiesner agreed that her information was consistent with that obtained from Student Aid by Yates: that it was currently taking three to four weeks from the date of receipt of all relevant documentation for cash to actually be disbursed to students.

In a conversation with Student Aid Director, Francois Rioux the Brunswickan was told that

N.B. Student Aid is proud of its service to its clientele and that we have one of the fastest services in the country at this point in time. Rioux added that although this was true, N.B. Student Aid was constantly aware of opportunities for improvement of the system.

Rioux confirmed the reports that problems arose both from confirmation of earnings documentation and internal difficulties. Regarding the latter situation Rioux explained that when awards to students exceed the funding provided by the government, authorization is needed before more funding can be received by the department.

This authorization process may sometimes contribute to delays. He said that this year's expenditures have been somewhat higher than in previous years.

Another factor which Rioux mentioned as a possible contributor to delays is the time Student Aid staff has had to take to answer inquiry phone calls. He said that during peak periods there have been as many as nineteen thousand incoming phone calls in a single day. Rioux elaborated by saying

that there is a potential number of five telephone calls relating to each client. These calls come from parents, respective institutions, local M.L.A., counsellors and the clients themselves.

Rioux offered some advice for the coming academic year. He said that students should apply as early as possible. As well, Rioux suggested that confirmations of earnings documentation should be supplied to Student Aid as soon as possible - ideally in September. Rioux said that if students were conscientious in this matter that their disbursements should be awaiting them upon return to classes in January.

Rioux also advised that information pamphlets or brochures should be read carefully so that students are aware of their responsibilities and what is required of them with regard to Student Aid. Rioux again confirmed that even if students take care of all their responsibilities, there are still improvements that can be made to the system from his end. He said that new projects and modifications are currently being developed and evaluated and that the future is looking much better.

Women's rally "Count Women In"

Press Release

New Brunswick women's groups and individuals concerned about women's issues are being invited to join in Rally '92 at 11:00 am on March 19th in Fredericton.

In a letter from Elaine Murray coordinator of Rally '92, she describes the rally as being an opportunity to communicate to the government a message from the province's women.

She writes "Our message: in time of restraint, women and children count. "Our Rally call: 'Count women in!'"

The agenda for the event is to rally at the Legislature, to attend Question Period and to invite premier McKenna and members of all political parties to attend a luncheon at the Monseigneur Boyd Family Centre.

At the luncheon, representatives from groups in attendance will be asked to address the rally to explain their group's mandates and areas of concern.

One of those who will be in attendance at the event is UNB SU Vice-President External Tammy Yates. She will be taking a break from her

campaigning for the SU elections to attend the rally which she feels will be very worth while.

Yates is hopeful that the premier will attend the rally, as he has been fairly inaccessible to the VP in the past. Murray's invitation to the rally stresses that "in particular this year, we want to acknowledge the dedication, intellect, vigor and spirit of New Brunswick women, which has energized and enriched this province socially, culturally and economically, from its very beginning."

Guest speakers at the luncheon include: Mona Beaulieu, union activist and feminist; Nancy Hartling, Executive Director of support to single mothers; Janice Harvey, President of the

Board of Directors of the Conservation Council; Lynda Silas-Martin, President of the Nurses Union; Barbara Martin, member of the NB Native Women's Council and Sister Renaud, NB Coalition of Transition Houses.

For more information on the rally call 459-8074

CHSC donates to library

by Kirsten Burgess

This year the College Hill Social Club made a significant contribution to the libraries of UNB/STU.

The \$6000.00 donation allowed the libraries to buy five on-line printers for the Phoenix system (three in the Main Library, one in the Education Resource Centre, and one in the Engineering Library) and to build and furnish a conference room in the Main Library.

The Social Club, at the end of the 1991 fiscal year, found that they had a surplus of funds and decided once again to make a donation to a part of university life. Last year's donation enabled the Lady Beaverbrook Gym to buy equipment for the weight room.

Chris Daigle, CHSC Board of Directors, explained that the Social Club decided to donate money to the libraries because they are a resource that all students use.

Although this is only the second large-scale donation that the Social Club has made to the university, it is only one of many donations that they have made to the university and the surrounding community.

Early in the first term the Social Club gave money to local charitable organization CHIMO. This was followed by a Food Drive to raise food donations for the Fredericton Food Bank, and a Christmas Toy drive which raised \$1100.00 and 10-15 boxes of toys for the Salvation Army.

In addition to these organizations, the Social Club also supports many university sports teams.



Shown are Chris Daigle, of the CHSC Board of Directors, and John Teskey, of the UNB Libraries, at the unveiling of the new CHSC donated computer system at the Library. Michael David Smith photo.