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Editorial

Student participation a farce, university keeps us in the dark

This issue was in some ways the hardest one to put together. The Gazette learned a heavy budget was coming down sometime in the beginning of March, and were pretty well assured the information would be made available to us at the end of the month, in time to get it out and feel around for some reaction.

It didn't happen. Our sources on the Board of Governors couldn't speak. With persistence and with the help of some of the members on council we gleaned tidbits of information when Robbie Shaw came to a student council meeting already three days into the university's fiscal year. We were given what Shaw termed an "optimistic" scenario, with a \$4.5 million deficit to reconcile.

Students at the meeting felt hurt, and they felt betrayed. One week to go until exams, one more issue of the Gazette, and no way to tell the rest of the Dalhousie community that we had been duped once again into thinking we actually had some say in what gets done to us.

An array of services which enhance and improve the quality of university academia was once again on the chopping block.

So, with our tidbits of information we started poking around and found to our dismay that nobody else knew what to expect this year either.

Talking to Eric Perth, Director of Dalhousie's Cultural Activities is a perfect example of reactions we got trying to research our stories on the cutbacks.

Perth knew his budget was going to drop, at least in real terms. But he didn't expect the information the Arts Centre, in an optimistic funding scenario, will probably get between \$75,000 - 80,000 chopped off.

On receiving the information, which had not yet been conveyed to him by Robbie Shaw, there was a moment of silent disbelief. Then a quiet "I have no comment to make until I talk to Robbie Shaw."

Same thing happened with Kel Antoft, Director of the Institute of Public Affairs. "I don't for one moment think Dal would turn its back on us."

And Linda Milrod, Director of the Art Gallery, just shook her head when the reporter asked what would happen if a mere ten per cent were missing from next (this) year's budget. A slight shrug of the shoulders. "You don't get anywhere if you don't cooperate."

We're glad the administration finally came forward

with the information even if there was relatively little time to get it out to you. We feel some of the hurt might have been spared if people had some inkling as to what was going on, had some preparatory input into their own future. No one thought it was going to be this bad.

And this was supposed to be an "optimistic" projection.

But maybe Robbie Shaw thought releasing projected figures would tip the university's precarious hand to the provincial government. Maybe he thought there would have been a panic, as there was at last year's budget announcement.

Whatever the reason we don't agree. We have a right to know what we have to live with, even if it's unpleasant.

The Gazette hopes that Robbie Shaw's wish for more open communication expressed at that fateful April 3 council meeting will still hold. If anything good comes of this mess, it might be an increased sense of community between students, faculty and administration.

After all, don't tragedies bring families together?