

Financial aid may improve next year

by Jeff Tensee

Ontario student loans and grants may be more equitable next year. The much-criticized OSAP (Ontario Student Assistance Program) system is being reviewed by a provincial government committee.

The committee's suggestions will be presented later this summer to the Minister of Colleges and Universities, Richard Allen. Allen may use the suggestions to renovate the 24-year-old OSAP program.

Rob Centa, external vice president for the York Federation of Students, is a student representative on the review committee. He said he expects "significant changes" from the review.

But "it all depends on how receptive the NDP is to the propositions made by the committee," Centa cautioned.

Last month the minister announced some changes to OSAP, including extra funds for married students and students with disabilities. However, many observers say more radical changes are necessary.

Currently, grants are only available to self-supporting (as defined by OSAP) students who are either married, have worked three years full-time, or have dependent children.

Many students who do not qualify for grants need to borrow thousands of dollars to finance an undergraduate degree.

"It should be an all-grant system," said Chris Lawson, a researcher for the Ontario Federation of Students. "I don't think there should be loans."

Centa says he doubts the committee will make such a dramatic move this summer.

Richard Jackson, a Ministry of Colleges and Universities representative on the committee, says he has "no preconceived notions" about the outcome of the review, since the role of the ministry is to "facilitate discussion".

But Lawson says he expects little from this discussion.

"I sincerely have my doubts. Given what they have done with tuition fees I don't believe for a minute that they are going to move to an all-grant system," Lawson said.

(Tuition fees increased 8% this year despite the NDP's promise of tuition freeze).

Currently, OSAP sets the cost of living for Metro Toronto students at \$132 a week. The Metro Social Planning Council — which sets payments for social assistance programs

— sets it at \$226 a week. Lawson said the ministry needs to bridge this gap to improve OSAP.

In response, Jackson said this can

be done in the near future if "the near future is not this September." This would make possible "acceptable costs of living by 1992-93."

"We are not even at the middle of our discussions and it is too early to say what the outcome will be at the end," Jackson said.

One union signs contract

Union talks continue

by Sam Putinja

York professors and librarians accepted a new one-year contract featuring an increase of up to nine percent in wages and benefits.

Brenda Hart, negotiator for YUFA (York University Faculty Association), said bargaining with the administration was unusually quick and successful.

"It was one of the best negotiations I've ever been through. Both sides really wanted to negotiate. What is unusual is that we agreed to continue negotiating."

YUFA and the administration were able to settle in less than a month by focusing on specific issues and agreeing to meet later this year to discuss other matters.

The initial talks focused on issues including pay, retirement and affirmative action. The next set of talks will look at concerns such as workloads, flexible career patterns and safety and security.

Part-timers still talking

Other unions have yet to reach a settlement with the administration. CUEW (Canadian Union of Educational Workers), which represents about 700 teaching assistants and 1300 part-time faculty members, expects to gain salary increases similar to YUFA's, says chief negotiator Margaret Watson.

CUEW is seeking representation on academic decision-making boards, from which it is currently excluded. According to Watson, the decisions of these boards "have a tremendous impact on the teaching our members do."

Teaching assistants will again be fighting for smaller class sizes in the current CUEW negotiations. They have had no progress on this issue since 1987.

A likely source of bitter contention this year may be non-union lecturers. Hired by the administration and known as "lecturer excludees," there were about 75 such lectures at York two years ago. In 1989 the administration agreed to reduce their numbers, but they now number around 100.

Safety a Concern

Campus safety is also a major concern for CUEW this year. In August, the results of studies commissioned by the union at a cost of \$17,000 will be released.

Doug Allen, a researcher for CUEW, said campus safety has become a more prominent concern for the union.

"The massacre in Montreal alerted us to this," Allen said. "We feel we have to make progress."

The Canadian Union of Public Employees is also currently negotiating with the university. Union Steward Tony Loftus said he would not comment while the talks are in progress.



Falcons released on roof of Ross

Dan Quick of the Ministry of Natural Resources holds one of six peregrine falcons released into their natural environment July 14 — on the roof of the Ross Building. Quick said the location is an ideal place for the young birds to learn to fly. "It's real high up, and it's a lot like a natural nesting area... there are plenty of updrafts and thermals. This makes it easy for the birds to fly off the 'cliff' and catch their prey."

The falcons have been considered nearly extinct since the 1960s, when DDT and other pesticides began to destroy their reproductive system. The release is part of a ministry program to reintroduce the birds to their natural environment.

According to Quick, the birds will likely stay on the roof of the building for several months, until they have learned to fly with enough confidence to hibernate. In the meantime they will eat "almost anything" — including the pigeons and seagulls which plague the building.

York fee called "back-door tuition increase"

by Jennifer Lim and Doug Saunders

An extra fee York is attempting to charge students has been called a "back-door tuition increase" by Ontario government representatives.

The fee, which would total \$5 per full-time course, would be charged automatically starting September 1992.

"We wanted to [introduce the levy] without a referendum to provide some support to services for students right away," said Sheldon Levy, York's vice president of institutional affairs.

According to Caroline Winship, a student representative on the Board

of Governors, the levy would go to general maintenance, operating services and new facilities.

In the past, the Ministry of Colleges and Universities only approved levy fees for specific projects — such as York's student centre and recreation facilities.

The new fee would simply be added to the central capital budget.

York, Queens and two other universities hope to collect an additional fee from students at the time of tuition payments, Levy said.

Dianne Crocker, an officer for the ministry, said she doubts these fees will win government approval.

"I think the government is very

aggressive about not having back-door tuition increases."

A ministry staff member who asked to remain unnamed said there is "no chance" York's fee will be approved.

Michelle Hughes, president of the York Federation of Students, said the fee is unfair.

"Tuition fees are high enough, and a lot of people are not working; to add an extra \$25 [for a full course load], will be even harder," said Hughes.

Whether York will proceed with the \$5 per course capital levy is yet unknown. If approved by the ministry, the levy is expected to be implemented in the next academic year.

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