

MPHEC endorses

Tuition increases

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Photo: Justin Hall

Health plan

Be prepared to wait

by Daniele Gauvin

Dalhousie's new health plan isn't as rosy as its promotional flyers would indicate. According to Dr. Elizabeth Holmes, who practises at Dalhousie Student Health, "many students have complained that they have not received any money yet for their claims. Promotional flyers and user numbers were sent out right away but claims haven't been processed yet."

The flyers promote the H. Ingles Insurance Company's drug plan, which promises prompt repayment to users. Under the plan, which Student Council brought to Dalhousie in Sept., students pay for their own prescription drugs and are later reimbursed by the company. To do so, they must fill out appropriate forms (available from the S.U.B. information desk and Student Health) and mail them to the company's head office in Toronto.

Holmes feels that a drug plan which is so cheap (\$7.50

per person) and yet so all-encompassing must be based on the assumption that students won't bother to fill out and send their claim forms.

Nina Singer, the Centre's co-ordinator, is worried that students may have a lengthy wait before them if they were expecting a refund in less than three months. "By the time some refunds come in, students may have left for home," Singer said.

Students who have been part of the Ingles and Co. health plan at Acadia University and Simon Fraser University in British Columbia have had problems getting refunded as well. A story in the Peak, the student newspaper at Simon Fraser, disclosed that many students had not received repayment for medical bills and drugs after a six month wait and that some had to call Toronto directly at their own expense to ask for refunds.

The company had a disclaimer published in the Peak soon after the article ap-

peared. UBC no longer uses the Ingles plan, although the **Gazette** was not given a reason for the change.

Holmes said that most doctors at the clinic were satisfied with the plan's coverage of foreign students, who are not covered by MSI and would otherwise have to meet all medical expenses themselves. Doctors at the Centre are also concerned that the computer list which the university released to the company as proof of students' enrollment may be incomplete, as such lists have been in the past, and may therefore exclude some students from the plan unfairly because of computer error.

The plan itself was adopted at the first Council meeting in Sept. At that time, some councillors expressed reservations about the plan and asked for a longer deliberation period. However, the plan was adopted immediately on the executive's recommendation.

by Valerie Mansour
Canadian University Press

Tuition fee increases in the Maritimes, where tuition is already the highest in the country, seem inevitable according to a report from the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission.

The MPHEC has recommended to the provincial governments a 9.5% increase in operating grants for 1979-80, but in its report said the grant would have to be 10.5% in order to prevent a tuition increase. The MPHEC's recommendation must be approved by the Council of Maritime Premiers who are presently studying the report.

Education minister Terry Donahue said that it is quite unlikely that the government would come up with a 10.5% increase to eliminate the chances of tuition increases.

"The treasury department is talking about 5% increases for many departments, so it's going to be difficult reaching the MPHEC's funding level this year."

Donahue would not commit himself to agreeing or disagreeing with the MPHEC's position that tuition should rise with the cost of living. However, he did say the gap between students' fees and the actual costs of education is widening. "At some point someone has to pay. I realize students are at a point when they're least able to pay."

Deric Burton, special assistant to the Nova Scotia Minister of Ed said he expects the government will tell the universities to accept the recommendation and then try to hold tuition fee increases around 9%.

In its report the commission said tuition fee increases have been considerably below rates of inflation partly because of government and student pressures placed upon institutions. No provision is provided to offset tuition increases because the commission believes it is reasonable for tuition fees to increase with the cost of living.

The Commission expressed concern about the levels of support being provided to post-secondary education and the resulting effects upon the quality and financial stability of the region's post-secondary education system.

The Government operating grants for the last three years have been less than the rate of inflation. The commission believes post-secondary institu-

tions should be affected by government spending restraints, but they feel the restraints being faced by comparable government departments is not as difficult.

The MPHEC is concerned that if faculty salaries continue to deteriorate, qualified faculty will leave the region. As well, institutions have come to the point where there could be reduced programme offerings and a lower quality of education.

B.J. Arsenault, chairperson of the Students Union of Nova Scotia (SUNS) said he seriously questions the role of the MPHEC who have recommended tuition increases to an area which already has the highest tuition in the country.

"We'll be meeting with the MPHEC to express our view", said Arsenault. SUNS urges the government to provide at least 10.5% to prevent tuition increases. It is the policy of our organization to oppose any and all tuition increases this year."

Arsenault said SUNS will discuss plans for lobbying action at their plenary, the last weekend in January.

Terry Morrison, student representative on the MPHEC, said the increase is reasonable given the present economic situation. "I can live with it providing the Council of Maritime Premiers fund to that level. Another percentage point would be nice, but at 9.5% tuition at least won't rise beyond the cost of living."

"It's interesting that the MPHEC has pointed out that tuition is an issue", said Morrison. They are resolved they don't want tuition to increase drastically but they believe tuition should rise along with everything else."

John Keyston of the Atlantic Association of Universities said that individual universities had asked the MPHEC for a 17% increase. Although the AAU has yet to make an official statement, Keyston said he had hoped for a higher increase. "I think there are going to be tuition increases at a substantial number of institutions", he said.

The Council of Maritime Premiers was expected to voice their judgement on the MPHEC's recommendations December 18. However, Prince Edward Island stalled the decision by requesting that a new funding formula be established.

CMP's announcement is now expected in late January.

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