

Ontario increases student grants

TORONTO (CUP) — Ontario student leaders are drinking Cointreau in celebration of a newly announced \$22 million increase in student assistance by College and Universities Minister Gregory Sorbara.

Sorbara announced Feb. 26 a hefty 17 per cent increase in the Ontario Student Assistance Program. All but \$1 million of the increase will be in the component of non-refundable grants.

"Everybody talks about increasing accessibility to our universities," said Sorbara aide Bob Richardson. "But unlike the previous (Conservative) government, we are putting money where our mouth is."

Ontario Federation of Students chair Matt Certosimo had some laurels for the government. "No matter how much I criticize Mr. Sorbara and the Liberal government, I must say that their record on OSAP has been very positive," he said.

Last year, the Liberals raised OSAP funds eight per cent, with most of the increase going towards grants. In the period between 1979

and 1984, when the Conservatives were in office, debt loads increased from \$1,500 to \$5,300 for the average student during a regular period of study.

The announcement also included changes to OSAP guidelines, meaning more money to students from low- and middle-income families. OSAP calculates student financial need by considering parental income and assuming parents will contribute to their child's education. This assumed contribution has now been substantially lowered for students from lower-income families.

For example, a student from a family of three children with a total income of \$30,000 will now be eligible for \$4,000 in grant assistance, an increase of \$990.

"If we lower the parental contribution expectation at the bottom of the scale," said Liz Dimeo, manager of the OSAP appeals department, "that means we are expecting less parental contribution all the way up, so more students at a bit higher up on the scale will get a

bit more money. I emphasize a bit." The announcement also included:

- ** a new program for single parents, with increased grants from \$2,500 to \$3,500 maximum;
- ** an increase in grants for single, independent students, from \$1,350 maximum per term to \$1,500;
- ** an increase of personal living allowance for students studying away from home, from \$99 to \$106 a week;
- ** 800 new on-campus jobs for students in financial need.

Ontario students attending colleges and universities outside the province will now be eligible for OSAP loans.

Roughly 35 per cent or 110,000 students in Ontario require financial aid through OSAP. Of these, 61 per cent are single and receive parental assistance, 28 per cent are independent and single, six per cent are independent and married, and five per cent are single parents.

In January last year, OFS made a number of recommendations to the government regarding OSAP.

Certosimo said Sorbara has "come through on about two-thirds of those recommendations, but some specifics were not addressed."

Grant eligibility periods are still only four years, or eight semesters, said Certosimo.

"This does not respond to students who switch programs, attend a community college for two years and then go to university, returning students, graduate students, and those students who wish to go into professional programs such as law and medicine. These programs should not be exclusively for students of higher income families," he said.

Certosimo also pointed out that

the \$7 per week increase in the cost of living increase is not substantial and does not respond to the needs of students living in higher cost areas, such as Toronto and Ottawa.

"The reaction has been pretty positive," said Richardson. "But it doesn't mean that OSAP is perfect. I think it shows that the Liberal government in Ontario is taking student aid very seriously. You won't find (this) increase anywhere else in Canada."

The Liberal government in Quebec transferred \$24.3 million from grants to loans last spring. Grants of any kind were eliminated in British Columbia by the Social Credit government in 1984.

Women against censorship

BURNABY (CUP) — Toronto journalist Varda Burstyn says the federal government wants to eliminate sex, not sexism, with its obscenity legislation.

Since December 1984, when the government responded to a *Pent-*

house magazine pictorial of bound and gagged Japanese women by giving Canada Customs a freer reign to restrict entry of obscene material, the flow of pornography has not slowed, Burstyn told a recent forum sponsored by the B.C. Civil Liberties Association.

Instead, there has been a "systematic persecution of feminists, gays and lesbians," said Burstyn, editor of the book *Women Against Censorship*.

Burstyn said men's magazines which objectify women, such as *Penthouse* or *Hustler* — "that misogynist piece of excrement" — usually cross the border without problem, while anti-porn, erotica, and gay and lesbian literature is often stopped.

"So what we see is women displayed as sex objects, but we can't see people making love," she said.

To Burstyn, the main reason why censorship shouldn't be applied to sexual material is that sex is subjective — what some people see as obscene, others see as erotic.

As an example of the subjectivity of censorship, Burstyn said a passage describing consensual sado-masochism in *The Joy of Sex* is permitted entry into Canada, while a similar passage in *The Joy of Gay Sex* is banned.


"It's selective repression on the basis of what offends the people who are enforcing it," she said.

Burstyn said Bill 30, the obscenity legislation introduced last year by former Justice Minister John Crosbie, would not have worked because it outlaws the presentation of natural sexual functions and practices.

Although the legislation died on the order paper last fall when Parliament prorogued an extra month, the Justice Department is expected to soon introduce similar legislation.

GRADS!

IMPROVE YOUR STANDARD OF LEAVING



GET THE

\$400 CASH REBATE

AVAILABLE UNDER THE
FORD GRADUATE PROGRAM
AND FREEDOM FORD WILL MATCH
IT WITH ANOTHER

\$400 CASH REBATE

FOR A TOTAL OF


\$800 TOWARDS A LEASE OR PURCHASE

ONLY AT FREEDOM FORD
SEE US FOR DETAILS

75TH & 75TH 465-9411

FREEDOM

EDMONTON FORD



**VOLUNTEER
ACTION
CENTRE**

The Volunteer Action Centre (482-6431), a United Way agency, has the following urgent requests that are of interest to students:

Interpreter Bank: Volunteers with fluency in a second language (as well as English) are needed to staff an interpreter bank.

Crime Victims' Services: Edmonton Police Department's Crime Victims Service needs volunteers to provide emotional support and information to crime victims. Training is provided.

Visually Impaired Support: Volunteers needed to make audiotapes from texts, short stories and books for visually impaired students.

Birth Control Counselling: Volunteers needed to provide counseling and information about birth control, pregnancy and contraception. Extensive training and support is provided.