

Province raking in the bucks from student loan user fees

BY ANGELIA PACIENZA

TORONTO (CUP) — The Ontario government doesn't think there is anything wrong with charging user fees to needy students re-

questing help to fund their education, a ministry official says.

"It's like a whole lot of things in our modern lifestyle," said Danièle Gauvin, communications officer for the Ontario Ministry of Education, of the user-fees. "The

people who are actually using the service sometimes are asked to cover the cost of it rather than others who aren't using that particular service."

The provincial Tories were criticized last month when the Ontario Liberals learned that user fees charged to students borrowing money from the province totals more than \$800,000.

"It's like a slap in the face for students who are applying to the government for help to be able to go to school," says Lyn McLeod, a Liberal member of provincial parliament.

The information was contained in a report obtained through a Freedom of Information request filed by McLeod's office. The report shows that money collected from Ontario Student Assistance Program user fees is put into a general revenue fund.

A \$2 user fee on a 1-900 telephone number for information on student loans was implemented in November 1996 and has since collected nearly \$400,000 from students.

This month, the line will be operating at its busiest, as students find out about the status of their loans.

Another \$420,000 has been collected from a \$10 fee for students filing paper appli-

cations. But the ministry says it wouldn't be practical to do so.

"There's so many thousands of different individual fees in government that it would cost a lot to administer, to put back into its file," said Gauvin, adding the money earns interest in a general account and is used for various government expenditures.

Students who wish to avoid user charges are asked to file applications and check their status via the Internet.

After the release of the report, Johnson said students could use a 1-800 telephone line instead of the 1-900 line which charges them a \$2 fee. However, he later retracted his statement when the 1-800 number turned out to be out of service.

The toll free line was disconnected in December 1996 and replaced with the 24-hour service line.

Ontario is the only province to charge students these types of user fees.



WE SHARE THE AIR

To prevent HARM to people who suffer from CHEMICAL SENSITIVITIES

PLEASE AVOID

SCENTED PRODUCTS

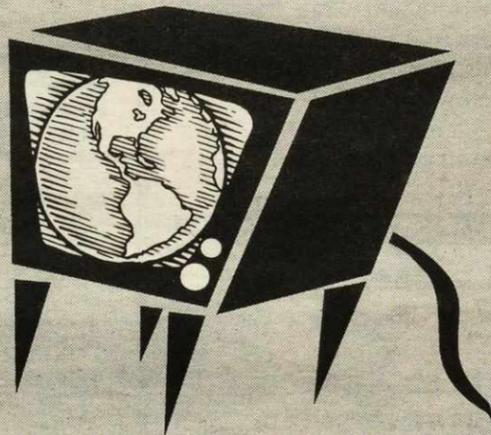
PLEASE

DO NOT USE SCENTED DEODORANT, AFTER SHAVE, HAIRSPRAY, COLOGNE, SHAMPOO, SOAP AND OTHER SCENTED PERSONAL CARE PRODUCTS AS THEY RELEASE CHEMICALS WHICH HARM SENSITIVE PEOPLE

For more information call the Safety Office: 494-2495

Student Specials!

**\$9.95
Cable
Installation**



**\$19.95
Andara
Installation**



Save up to \$35. Cable installation for university or college students is only \$9.95 during September. Just ask for the student special when you call. All we require is proof of a valid 98-99 student ID and your Visa or Mastercard number for automatic credit card payment when you order, or provide a void cheque for pre-authorized payment at the time of installation.

Call now and get connected to Andara, Halifax Cable's high-speed Internet service. A cable modem from Andara can access the Internet at speeds of up to 1 Mb/s, roughly 20-60 times faster than traditional telephone modems!

Andara represents the next generation in Internet access, bringing the Internet into the home at speeds that make it enjoyable and easy to use!

**Call 455-4638
to order.**

**Call 453-2800
to order.**

**Halifax
Cable**

Andara
High Speed Internet

Taxes extra. Some restrictions apply. Pre-approved payment by Visa, Mastercard or pre-authorized chequing is required.