



By SAMANTHA BRENNAN & KATIE FRASER

NOT ENOUGH MONEY

Dalhousie and other universities in the Maritime provinces will suffer enormously if the recommendations by the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission are accepted...

On a cold day in January more than 700 students from Dalhousie University and Kings College marched through knee-deep snow to the provincial legislature to protest the underfunding of post-secondary education. Faced with the threat of a faculty strike over pensions and salaries, the cuts to Dalhousie's funding are no longer just numbers on paper to students.

"Things are getting scary, Terry," read some of the marchers' signs, referring to Nova Scotia's education minister Terry Donahoe. A month later, with the faculty dispute resolved, things have just gotten scarier for the faculty, instructors, staff and students of Nova Scotia's universities.

The Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission (MPHEC) has recommended an increase to the operating grants of universities of only 4.5 per cent. This recommendation is intended to sustain existing programs at post-secondary institutions in New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia.

Released at the end of January the report of the MPHEC goes before the Council of Maritime Premiers who will respond within two months.

The MPHEC, an advisory board to the three provincial governments, was created by the Council of Maritime Premiers in 1974 to recommend increases in funding for post-secondary institutions. The commission is made up of representatives from government,

business and the universities.

Opposition to the report of the MPHEC has been not slow in coming. Faculty, administration and students may be divided on other issues, but this is one case where their cry is united—a 4.5 per cent increase in funding is simply not enough.

John Keffton, a spokesperson for the Association of Atlantic Universities (AAU) says the recommendation shows an "absolute lack of recognition of the real needs of the universities." In its brief to the commission the AAU said that a 10 per cent increase was needed if the universities are to maintain existing levels of service without sacrificing quality.

A major problem facing the universities is that many of their faculty associations have already reached salary settlements well above the recommended 4.5 per cent increase. The faculty at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design and at St. Francis Xavier university have both received an 8.5 per cent increase in salary.

Lawrence Sterling, acting chair of

the MPHEC, says it is not the responsibility of the commission to decide for the university how it will spend its operating grant.

The universities know that traditionally they don't have information on funding until March or April, Sterling says. Deciding on a settlement before that is a risk they're knowingly taking, he says.

Since salaries make up a large portion of a university's budget, cuts will have to be made elsewhere.

This means larger classes, freezes on faculty hirings and possible cuts to departments.

Dalhousie Student Union president Alex Gigeroff says this time around universities will be forced to look at selective cutting in departments to maintain the stability of core arts and science classes. He also predicts universities will have to look at cutting back in almost all non-academic areas.

Margaret Fulton, president of Mount Saint Vincent University, confirmed Gigeroff's worse fears. She says a funding increase of 4.5 per cent or less will make it impossible to hire any new faculty, purchase any new equipment or fund the proposed new communication building the Mount needs to accommodate increased numbers of students.

Like most other institutions in Nova Scotia, MSVU has experienced a dramatic surge in enrolments in the past five years. The MPHEC report

itself details an increase of 8600 students in the post-secondary institutions of the Maritime Provinces. This figure means the number of full-time students at Dalhousie University and the Technical University of Nova Scotia combined have been added to the system without any new institutions being built to accommodate the increase. In fact, as the existing universities have been flooded, funding has declined.

The 1984/85 MPHEC report recommended a special two per cent increase to take into account increased enrolments. The Nova Scotia government ignored the recommendation and this year's MPHEC report does not contain a similar recommendation.

Sterling says this is because the commission believes enrolments will soon stabilize themselves.

The report states that transfer rates from high schools to universities are approaching their maximum, as 90 per cent of Maritime high school graduates meeting university requirements were enrolled at university in 1983. The report goes on to say that their data for the last year actually shows a decline in enrolments of about two per cent for 1984.

The MPHEC report notes another change since last year in the trend in enrolment in arts and sciences means students no longer want to narrow
Continued on page 14