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### Committees formed

## Cutbacks fight underway

By GORD GRAHAM

Organized opposition to the Ontario government's cutbacks to social services is growing, both on campus and throughout the province.

The umbrella term "cutbacks" refers to provincial spending constraints that take a number of forms, including the announced closing of hospitals throughout Ontario, the recent TTC fare increase, and the threatened hefty rise in tuition costs.

#### 35 MEMBERS

The York-Cutbacks Committee (YAC) was formed in early February and now includes 35 active members. Drawing on the momentum of the January march on Queen's Park, YAC holds meetings every second week and has adopted an initial series of demands that includes opposition to the Henderson report, the Tory document that calls for a 65 per cent tuition increase.

The committee's plans include organizing a day-long teach-in, possibly in March, and publishing a newsletter, both to detail the cutbacks' implications at York.

"Cutbacks aren't just an abstract government policy; they affect the quality of people's lives," said Mary Lochhead, a member of YAC's steering committee.

#### CUTBACKS HURT

"It isn't just a case of tuition fees going up and grants getting harder to get," continued Lochhead, "Summer jobs will be hard to find too, and areas of student's lives outside the university are being affected — if you get sick, if you need daycare, or even if you use the TTC, the cutbacks are going to hurt you."

Opportunities for Youth, a federal programme that last summer provided almost 7,000 summer jobs for Ontario students, has been cancelled as part of Ottawa's cost-cutting scheme.

"Cutbacks specifically affect women, too; it's like saying let them stay home and look after the kids, let them stay home and look after people who're sick because it won't cost the government anything," said Lochhead.

Several YAC members foresaw "excellent prospects" for the committee, and were confident of involving many more people from all areas of the university before the end of term.

#### TOWNTOWN GROUP

Meanwhile, a downtown group called the Coalition Against Cutbacks (CAC) has been rapidly expanding since its founding in mid-January. This coalition includes unions, social service and daycare workers, militant tenants, senior citizens and students.

Anyone who received a petition protesting the fare increases while travelling the subway over the past two weeks has encountered one group affiliated with the CAC.

Already thousands of names have been collected on petitions against the increases, which are partly due to Ontario's 5 per cent ceiling on increased subsidies for public transit in 1976-77.

CAC meetings are held every Monday night at City Hall where all who attend can speak and vote on motions proposed. Various subcommittees are working on publicity and fund-raising, the most visible signs of which are the black and white buttons reading

"Cutbacks hurt people" that have begun to appear around the city.

#### ALTERNATIVE MEASURES

A January 29 press release from the coalition declares that its goals are "to challenge the arbitrary cutbacks and ceilings recently proposed by the Ontario government" and "to fight against them until they are reversed, and to propose alternative measures based on social justice, democratic process and human need."

An intriguing document, dated February 9, prepared by Metro alderman John Sewell that was tabled by the CAC calls the cutbacks "clearly punitive", saying they "hit mainly at services that the public sees as being provided by municipal governments."

Sewell concludes that the government "has deliberately set increases in funding to these services at an artificially low level while at the same time ensuring that provincially-funded programmes operate at a realistic level."

#### LEFT IN THE LURCH

Sewell cited social services, public transit, and police as three areas which the province encouraged municipalities to develop over the past years and which have all been left in the lurch, either by reneging on formal agreements through technicalities, or by simply declaring subsidy rates so low that municipalities must raise taxes just to maintain past levels of service.

In this way, Sewell maintains, the municipal governments will be made scapegoats in the public's eye for the actions of the province.

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