



# editorial

## Students against employees University's potential plan

Look out. The university is being squeezed too hard, and something's going to give.

Both York University and the Ontario government are short of cash, and they'll have to do something nasty if they want to find enough money to pay their bills. And as students, we have to make sure they don't do it to us.

Universities get their money three ways: from tuition (which is set by the provincial government), from transfer payments from the province, and from private donations.

York doesn't get many donations. There's a general shortage of wealthy benefactors, and the administration's chilly approach to students has never won the wallets of alumni.

So we're left with transfer payments and tuition dollars. York has a tradition of toying with one to get more of the other.

When government funds were cut short in the 1970s, York tripled the number of students to get more tuition dollars. The result was ridiculously overcrowded classrooms and inadequate services for students — which forced students to plead for more government funds, which we eventually got.

They can't pull that one again, simply because they can't fit any more students on campus.

But they might have another trick up their sleeves.

Universities have only two ways of avoiding debts without getting more money from the government: they can ask for higher tuition fees, or they can pay lower wages.

And there's only two things in their way: strong unions and indignant students.

If unions and students are working together, there's little chance of large tuition hikes or wage cuts. The protests would be too loud and ugly.

But as they say, your enemy's enemy is your friend. The Ontario government and York University know this well, and they can use it to their advantage in two ways.

It will start with a threat: a wage freeze for 1992, for example. The university will tell workers that any pay increase would lead to bankruptcy.

Faculty and staff will be threatening to strike at York and on other campuses. That's when the Minister of Colleges and Universities will pull the card from his sleeve.

He'll offer to save us from being shut down. And he'll do it with an enormous tuition increase — 25 or 30 per cent.

Students will face a dilemma: if we take the increase, we'll be screwing ourselves; if we fight it, we'll be screwing our professors and possibly losing a year due to a major strike.

Of course, it could happen the other way around. The province could threaten a huge tuition increase, and then tell students they'll have to support a wage freeze if they want it reduced.

Either way, York students and employees will be turned against each other in a battle to be less victimized.

It's not a farfetched scenario; since Bob Rae's government insists on chopping university funds, somebody's going to have to pay the university's bills. They're either going to come out of our tuition, or their paycheques.

But it's a scenario we must avoid. The tuition increases, crowded classrooms, wage cuts and layoffs have a common source — the provincial and federal governments.

The feds are providing less and less transfer funds to the provinces for education and health. And the province is passing a smaller and smaller slice of that to schools.

Students and employees need to let the government know what an unpleasant place they've made the university. We need to keep tuition down to an affordable level, and campus wages up to a livable rate.

You can join thousands of other students and send a strong message to the government. The Ontario Federation of Students has organized a mass protest against underfunding on October 17. The university senate ruled last week that it's OK for students or staff to skip classes on that day. (Look for big blue posters on campus for more information)

Join us on the 17th and help us avoid a nasty scenario.

DS

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## EXCALENDAR

**Wednesday October 2**

\*\*\*Staff elections\*\*\*

at 4:30 General Meeting

All staff and volunteers are asked to attend.

Women's Caucus meets at 5:30

**Thursday October 3**

Black Caucus meets at 3:00

**Wednesday October 16**

Race, Representation and Reporting:

Getting the Whole Story

5:00 pm

with Chet Singh, Director of Race and Ethnic Relations,  
York University.

**Wednesday October 23**

Advanced Newswriting at 6:00 pm

with Clive Thompson, CUP Ontario Bureau Chief

**General Meetings**

**Every Wednesday**

**4:30 pm**

**All Welcome**