

Senate talks tough - report recommends freeze on faculty

by Cathy McDonald

The Dalhousie Senate is getting down to the nitty-gritty of dealing with Dalhousie's deficit. A recent report from the Senate Financial Planning Committee says the situation is serious and is getting rapidly worse.

The report, presented to Senate on Monday, recommends several stringent moves, including, in the short term, a freeze on faculty positions, no replacements for faculty who go on sabbatical or who resign or retire, and the encouragement of early retirement. The report recommended the sale of \$2.4 million in property, in addition to the \$2 million already up for sale, be considered.

Prof. William Jones, chairperson of the Financial Planning Committee, stressed that the series of recommendations were not intended to give Senate various proposals to choose from, rather the committee felt that it was mandatory that Senate endorse all the recommendations, since even in their totality, they would not be sufficient to eliminate the university's operating deficit.

Dal's accumulated deficit 1980/81 is projected to be \$8.3 million, with the operating deficit increasing 35 per cent to \$4.98 million from a deficit of \$3.68 million last year.

With this scenario firmly in mind, the Senate began a two-hour debate that adjourned after the discussion of only four of the nine short-term recommendations.

Some senators complained that they could not realistically understand and vote on the recommendations if they did not have the benefit of figures showing how many positions would not be replaced and how much money the university would save.

A repeated concern voiced by senators was the lack of a prioritized plan of action taking into consideration the academic as well as financial effects of the proposals.

"Another report is urgently needed on future proposed directions," one senator said.

Recommendations to rigidly disallow any faculty growth or replacement were amended to insert the phrase "except in unusual circumstances." Dean of Arts and Science, Donald Betts, cited the computer science program as an example of an "unusual circumstance". Student enrollment increased by 77 per cent this year, and a freeze on staff growth would make the situation miserable and unfair to students.

Proponents of the report in its unamended form stressed that

the nature of the crisis disallow exceptions to the rule. Senate should show the community and government that it recognizes and takes responsibility for Dalhousie's financial problems, said Jones.

The report refers to article 23.03 of the Collective Agreement between the Dalhousie Faculty Association and the University, recognizing that "the present financial situation demands the application of a significantly different viewpoint".

"The latter clearly states that replacements will be made unless deemed 'unnecessary', the decision of the Senate being final. We are persuaded that the present situation calls for no replacement unless deemed essential."

A senator said that there should be more emphasis on using the endowment funds or selling real estate to alleviate the debt that was caused by overly extensive capital expenditures in the first place.

Vice President Robbie Shaw said this route has been explored as far as is possible. Bond portfolios have been sold and the terms of investment have been changed to achieve a higher return on these investments.

A senator suggested that

donors be approached to change the conditions of their donations, so that they can be applied to the deficit.

"Everybody is asking for more information," said Jones. "The fact is, we are in a position where we have to tow the line. It was our attempt to take certain short term actions so that next year we can decide where appointments are needed and set priorities."

The amendments were passed with strong majorities. The five student senators,

dwarfed in a room of about 150 senators and observers, all voted against the amendments. John Logan, Student Union President, said the amendments undermine the purpose of the document. It is difficult for students to know if they should vote against measures that will decrease the quality of their education, and that may in the end force their tuition to go up drastically. Logan thought students would probably vote against the whole proposal anyhow.

Social assistance program needs overhaul

by Bruce Galloway

Severe problems faced by low income families in the Metro area are often compounded by an inadequate social assistance program, according to a social worker at Dalhousie Legal Aid. Housing shortages and unemployment have now reached crisis proportions, said Maureen MacDonald.

"Low income people are having a very difficult time competing in the housing market," said MacDonald, adding that "Municipal social assistance has not adjusted its policies quick enough to help these people."

Housing represents just one of the many problems with the whole social assistance program, MacDonald said. Other problems include a lack of adequate funding, a shortage of staff development, overworked and burnt-out workers and a bureaucracy that many find intimidating and apathetic.

Halifax abounds in horror stories concerning the treating of

people. MacDonald tells of one woman forced to leave her residence in Dartmouth after being sexually abused by her landlord and battered by her husband. The woman went to social services in Dartmouth where she was informed that the onus was on her to find new accommodation. For the next three weeks the woman and her seven children lived on and off in a car while she attempted to find a home. Finally, the woman came to Dal Legal Aid, who located a suitable shelter for her in public housing.

MacDonald noted that even after people on social assistance manage to find housing, they remain at a disadvantage. In many cases the rent is paid directly to the landlord from the social service office, thereby denying the tenant any bargaining power in the event of a problem. Furthermore, social services will not step in on behalf of the person if that person has a problem with a landlord. "The

whole social service system perpetuates poverty and blames the victim," said MacDonald.

Currently in Halifax an adult on social assistance is given a

maximum of seventy dollars a month for food and seventeen dollars for clothing. Access to such necessities as medical and dental care (known as special needs) are deplorable, said MacDonald. A pregnant woman must wait until the seventh month of her pregnancy before receiving extra money for things such as maternity clothing.

MacDonald said that in Halifax eight out of ten people on social assistance are women.

MacDonald felt current policies on the level of housing costs must be adjusted to allow people on social assistance to compete in the housing market. She ruled out further public housing as a solution, noting that "The only people who benefit from public housing are private contractors."



Redmond/Dal Photo

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