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Tuition fee increases on the way

By MICHAEL HOLLETT

The Ontario government will soon announce tuition fee increases for university students from \$100 to \$175 for next year, according to numerous sources.

The Ontario Federation of Students (OFS) announced this week that their sources within the Ministry of Colleges and Universities (MCU) expected a tuition increase of roughly \$100 for the next academic year to be announced today. They have since revised this and say the decision may be delayed.

Toronto Sun Queen's Park columnist, Claire Hoy, said his sources expect the increase to be \$175.

Carol Vaughn, administrative assistant to MCU Minister Harry Parrott, said, "He can't give any comment, he can't confirm or deny. The budget is still being determined and Dr. Parrott cannot announce any part of it until the whole thing is determined."

"It could be a couple of weeks before we know anything," said Vaughn.

Vaughn agreed that the minister had originally planned to announce his decision at the end of October, but she denied the delay had anything to do with National Student Day (NSD) on November 9.

The Opposition's critic for post-secondary education, David Warner of the New Democratic Party disagreed. "The Minister will try and avoid having to announce a decision until after National Student Day," he said.

"I expected a tuition increase but I hadn't thought it would be as high as reported in The Sun. I think Hoy's contacts are quite reliable though."

Warner opposed the increase saying, "I'm not in favour of raising tuition to make it the highest in Canada, which this increase would do."

He said the government would not have to get the increase approved by the legislature, but could merely inform the universities that they had changed tuition regulations. "They did the same thing with the OHIP premiums," he said.

Warner expected the NDP caucus would also oppose the tuition increase. He added, "If students feel the increase is unjust it would seem logical that they

voice their disapproval. If they protest at Queen's Park, that's an appropriate form. People always have the right to demonstrate their disapproval of government decisions."

John Sweeney, post-secondary education critic for the Liberals said Parrott would have to answer three questions from his party. They would want to know why the government feels an increase is necessary and how they determined the size of the increase. They would also want to know what corresponding changes would be made in the provincial loan and grant schemes.

"If they have good answers we would support the increase otherwise there is going to be a fight," said Sweeney.

According to Sweeney, the Liberals would like to see tuition determined by a "fair ratio" of student support. There would be a set percentage of student's education that he or she would be expected to pay. When students weren't meeting this ratio, tuition would be increased.

"To say there hasn't been a tuition increase in four years is not a good enough reason to raise it now," said Sweeney.

OFS chairperson, Murray Miskin said he was not surprised by the impending tuition increase. He said, "This increase cannot help but to serve as yet another barrier to those wishing to obtain an education. The people who pay most of the taxes in Ontario to support the post-secondary system, the working people, can't even afford to send their children to university."

York vice-president of student affairs, Bill Farr, said the university had not yet been informed of a tuition increase. "We were told not to expect our Bill announcement until the end of October and I assume any tuition announcement would be in that," he said.

He said university funding is not keeping up with inflation. "One way the government can help us get closer to inflation without placing the burden on ourselves is by allowing us to raise tuition," said Farr.

CYSF President Barry Edson who opposes an increase, feels the issue of tuition increases will have to go through the legislature. "It's important to jump on this right at

first reading and get some type of public reaction. In terms of political clout, support from non-students is most important because the Conservatives know they don't get that many votes from students anyway. It all hinges on what the Liberals are going to do."

"I would hope OFS will call a meeting so universities can get together and discuss tactics", said Edson.

Paul Kellogg, co-chairperson of the United Left Coalition (ULC) said, "The only surprise about the tuition increase is that they waited so long. Their attempt to divide and conquer with a preparatory fee hike for international students was a rather broad hint of their real intentions now becoming clear."

"They are making students pay for a budget crisis not of our making and are making post-secondary education even more of a privilege and less accessible to working people and lower income groups", he said.

Kellogg added, "National Student Day couldn't be happening at a better time. Now more than ever there is a need to educate, discuss and organize in defence of the right to a university education."



Pan-Africanist revolutionary, Stokely Carmichael speaking in Stedman Lecture Hall D, Tuesday at one of the wildest meetings in York's history. See the story on page five.

Bryon Johnson photo

York tenant poll to determine rent rebates or concessions

By AGNES KRUCHIO

A committee formed to negotiate for greater student participation in residence affairs will ask undergraduate residents to choose between a rent rebate or a say in residence administration.

The Rent Review Bargaining Committee, composed of representatives from all college and residence councils, the Council of the York Student Federation (CYSF) and the York University Tenant Association, (YUTA) decided last Friday to hold a referendum on the issue on November 8.

CYSF president Barry Edson, a member of the committee, said the decision was made because numerous students have enquired about getting their money back from the university. Edson estimates that 10 to 15 people have contacted his office about ways of getting a rebate.

Students will be able to opt for bargaining with the university to set up a committee to determine rents and to obtain decision-making powers for the food services committee, which at present can only make recommendations. Fifty per cent of both committees would be composed of students, chosen from college and residence councils, and CYSF.

According to Edson, the rent-setting committee would have to determine what costs are, because these determine rents. "We are concerned with the large bills from physical plant, for example. We want to find out whether or not they are justified," he said.

"Our main objective is to give 50 per cent of decision making power to students and people who live in residences and are affected directly by the decisions made."

The other choice is for students to challenge the university's rent increases in court. Rents were increased by 13.5 per cent over last year, and this may be 5.5 per cent

above the legally allowed rent increase in Ontario of 8 per cent.

On May 21, 1976, the Ontario government amended the Residential Premises Rent Review Act in order to exempt universities from rent review. This exemption was conditional. In order to be exempt, the university must consult with a recognized student council or association. Following consultation, the university must file a letter with the local rent review officer stating that consultation had taken place. Only after this has been accomplished is the university allowed to give notice of an increase to the tenants.

According to Edson, the bargaining committee "is of the legal opinion that the university may have failed to meet the provisions of exemption." If this is the case, then the 13.5 per cent increase is illegal, and after a test case, students may be awarded the excess, amounting to approximately \$49 per student.

This process would involve several stages of appeals and might take some time. According to Bernard Eastman, counsel retained by CYSF to advise on the rent issue, procedures could take anywhere from a month to a year, during which time legal costs might amount to anywhere from \$500 to \$5,000.

First the rent increase would be taken to the rent review officer, who would decide whether or not the act applies to the premises. His decision could be appealed to

the Rent Review Board, whose decision could possibly be taken to the Divisional Court of the Supreme Court of Ontario to be appealed, and from there possibly to the Court of Appeals. He did not think the case would get as far as that, and estimated that perhaps within six months the decision of the courts would be known.

Edson suggested that the university might want to settle out of court, if the process got as far as that. However, students could lose their case, in which situation they would have to cover the legal costs of their opponent, as well as their own.

Edson said that should students decide to appeal the rent increase as a group, college councils would have to cover the legal costs.

Ruth Hoffman, a second year psychology major who lives in a single room in Winters residence, says she is willing to be a test case, should students decide to go to court on the eight, "depending on what is involved".

"It's not so much the money," she said, "but that the university was wrong and should be punished. It's the principle of the thing." But she also thought the decision on what to do about the excess rents was up to students and not the bargaining committee. She said she had thought of going to the rent review board on her own, but that she would abide by the wishes of the majority of students.



OFS chairperson Murray Miskin holds the Toronto Sun announcing imminent tuition fee increases for university students.

Ed Fox photo

Inside

Cultural ambiance	page 2
Stokely Carmichael	page 5
Press conference	page 10
Alan Sparrow interview	page 11
Tarragon theatre	page 16