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# the Gazette

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## Student groups respond to federal cutbacks

BY KRISTIN MCNEILL

Provincial governments across Canada are scrambling to respond to cuts in federal-provincial transfer payments. This has led to broad cuts in social spending, including higher education.

These cuts are not going unopposed by student associations.

Both the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS) and the Canadian Alliance of Students' Association (CASA) are developing independent plans to deal with the aspect of the budget proposal that will affect funding for education. The leaders of both organizations agree that the cutbacks will have severe implications for students across Canada. It is likely that tuition fees would go up and that the student loan system would become increasingly burdensome.

The Canada Health and Social Transfer (CHST) is the "...latest bit of nastiness thought out by the federal government," said Tasha Bollerup, the Nova Scotia Representative to CFS's National Executive.

According to Dalhousie's Vice President (VP) External, Erin Ahern, the government will cut funding to the provinces by about \$2.5 billion nationwide this year, with another two billion cut next year. This will have severe implications for post-secondary education institutions, as well as for other groups that have traditionally benefitted from government financial assistance, such as the health and welfare sectors.

Besides giving less money to each province, another aspect of the government's budget reform is to transfer the responsibility of the allocation of funds. The federal government is conceding much of that responsibility to the individual provincial governments.

National Director of CASA Alex Usher said this transfer of funds creates a situation where it "is effectively up to each of the provinces to make those decisions" about the usage of the block payments and that "the question is what are the provinces going to do with it."

According to Bollerup, "The thing that is so significant about this is that the federal government is absolving itself of responsibility for social programs by giving it entirely to the provinces to deal with."

It is perceived that the downloading will continue from the national level to the municipal level. The lack of national standards gives the provincial governments more control over education and other social programs.

The CFS sees a lack of federal involvement as detrimental to Canadians who benefit from Canada's social services. Bollerup

said that a lack of national standards will lead to competition among the various interest groups. Funding cuts will be especially drastic for universities and health care institutes.

Usher said the idea of national standards has never existed and will never be possible, but he would like to see a level of national cooperation between the provinces to accommodate each of its student populations. His comments on the up and coming referendum campaigns on university campuses across Canada this fall reflects an optimistic view of what "student power" can achieve.

"I think, and CASA thinks, that student power is about the power of ideas," said Usher. "We're not bound to the status quo. We can take fresh looks at things and we can be innovative."

The Dalhousie student population will have a chance to react to the proposed budget cuts through CASA's policies, which were established in May. Over the past couple of months, CASA has developed alternatives to the continued cutbacks in education funding.

"What is Real Choices?" is CASA's referendum campaign. It's designed to present two

choices to students in terms of what they think is an appropriate way to deal with budget cuts to education.

The Dalhousie Student Union (DSU), which supports CASA's policies, will include a plebiscite question in this month's referendum. Students will be asked to choose between two approaches to education funding — the Federal Government's or CASA's alternative policies.

Ahern commented on CASA's active involvement in handling the possible effects of the CHST. "We are right on the ground floor," she said. "We are helping make the policies."

The Halifax members of CFS, along with other organized lobby groups such as the International Socialists and the Canadian United Postal Workers, will be staging a demonstration outside the office of Liberal MP Mary Clancy on Oct. 11 at 5 p.m. Their goal, said Bollerup, is "to educate with charm and style."

For more information on CASA's alternative funding, consult Policies of CASA available in the Student Union office. Details on CFS activities can be obtained through the Nova Scotia Representative to the National Executive at 494-8132.

## Empty seats greet election forum

BY MILTON HOWE

Student awareness reached a new low Tuesday night when not a single student came to the Dalhousie Student Union (DSU) election forum at Shirreff Hall.

When the time came for the forum to begin, the only people present were the candidates, some of the campaign leaders, DSU Vice President Academic Chris Lydon (who had arrived with the obviously unnecessary microphone), and a sign-language interpreter hired by the DSU.

There were two students quietly eating dinner in the cafeteria, but when it was suggested

to them that they listen to the candidates' speeches, they quickly left, pausing only to stuff their pockets with bananas.

The only actual jobs up for contention in the October 11, 12, and 13 by-election are the two positions of Student Senate Representative, for which Drew Campbell and Shannon Crowell are running unopposed. Voting for the senate positions takes place on October 11 and 12 only.

Other items include three referendum questions and two plebiscites.

The first question asks students if they support a \$25 per full-time student (\$20 per part-

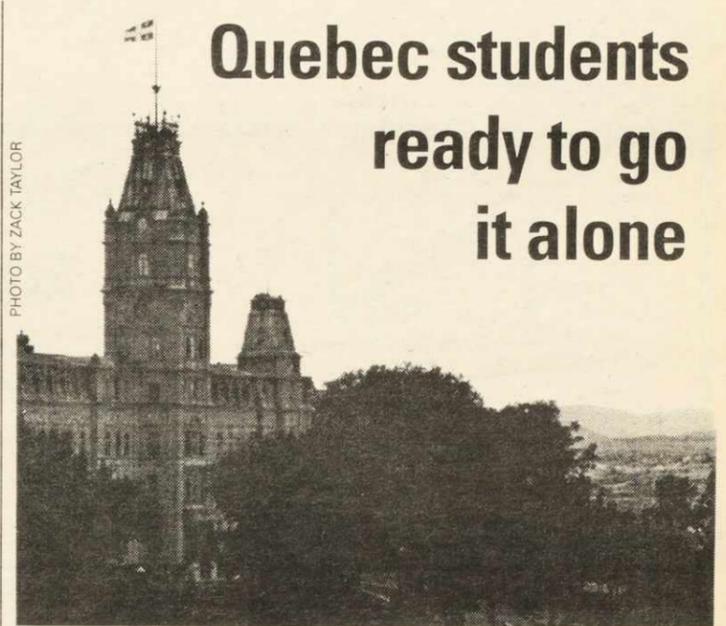


PHOTO BY ZACK TAYLOR

## Quebec students ready to go it alone

The Québec National Assembly: capital of a new country?

BY JIM BRIDGES

TORONTO (CUP) — With a little over a month before the vote, Québec students are gearing up for the province's referendum on sovereignty.

François Rebello, president of the Federation Étudiante Universitaire du Québec, which represents more than 100,000 Québec university students says that if the vote were up to Québec students, there would be a clear sovereigntist victory.

He said recent cuts to post-secondary education by the federal government have made it more difficult for his federation and Québec students to take a federalist stance.

"With more cuts to spending [from the federal government], we are getting more pressure on us to be more sovereigntist," he said.

"Last year, we put a lot of pressure on the federal government, but we didn't get any response to our request. It is difficult for us to be interested in staying in Canada."

Instead, Rebello feels Québec students would benefit under a sovereign Québec by eliminating the Canadian federal government's role in education funding.

"If we want to be sure that universities and education in Québec can be financed efficiently, we can be more sure if we pay our tax only in Québec."

But many students, especially at English universities in the province, are worried about the future of post-secondary education in an independent Québec.

"It could mean an aversion of out-of-province students [to come] to Québec, most of whom are English," said Jonathon Carruthers, president of Concordia's students' council. "It could affect enrolment for English universities."

Matt Wilson, a vice-president of Bishop's University student council, also said there are fears that a Yes win in the referendum could hurt the small English university. With cuts to post-secondary education, he fears that the government would not support all three English universities that currently exist in the province.

"At some point, it would mean the end of Bishop's," Wilson said. "McGill and Concordia don't have as much to lose."

But Nick Benedict, a student-council vice-president at McGill, says such fears are misplaced.

"Differential financing based on language ended 20 years ago," he said. "We have to have more confidence in Québec society. It's not that way. That's not to say there wouldn't be problems for McGill in a sovereign Québec, but a lot of the fear mongering is misplaced. It relies on the false prejudice that Québécois are more racist than anyone else."

## Dal security officer faces assault charge

BY SAM MCCAIG

A warrant for the arrest of a Dalhousie University security officer was issued on Tuesday, October 3 by a provincial court judge when the man failed to appear for his arraignment on a sexual assault charge.

Calvin Byard faces the charge after an alleged incident on August 10. Halifax police confirmed that they have been investigating a complaint lodged by a 20-year-old woman that she had been sexually assaulted. The complaint was reported on August 12.

Police also confirmed that the assault allegedly occurred on Dal property, but they would

neither confirm nor deny that it allegedly took place in the Dal security office.

The alleged incident was not of a violent nature, but involved touching, according to Constable Gary Martin.

Nobody at the Dalhousie security offices would comment on the situation, except to refer questions to the public relations department.

Dalhousie's public relations department would also not comment on the situation.

However, Dalhousie spokeswoman Marilyn MacDonald confirmed to *The Chronicle Herald* that a security officer had been suspended without pay "pending the outcome of the courts."

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