

cross-canada briefs

Sask. university budgets intact

BY CRAIG SAUNDERS

REGINA (CUP) — University students and administrators in Saskatchewan are breathing a collective sigh of relief after learning that the provincial government won't cut university operating budgets this year.

Although the province will receive \$15 million less in transfer payments from the federal government this year, the provincial government will make up \$11 million of the cuts — leaving the province's two universities with \$4 million less for capital expenditures, but the same operating budgets as last year.

"While this government can maintain operational funding for universities and federated colleges this year, the federal cuts will make it necessary to reduce funding for these institutions by \$5 million in 1997-98 and a further \$5 million in 1998-99," said provincial Finance Minister Janice MacKinnon in her budget address.

Administrators and students at both provincial universities are relieved that the cuts are not deeper, but remain apprehensive about the future.

"It's nowhere near as bad as it could have been," said University of Saskatchewan vice president Patrick Browne.

Despite having prepared for a much worse situation, Browne is quick to add that the university is "not out of the woods yet," and predicts tuition hikes in the four to six per cent range.

Agency protects Arctic environment

BY SAMER MUSCATI

OTTAWA (CUP) — Inuit women in Northern Québec carry so many toxins in their bodies that some have stopped breast-feeding their babies.

Instead of risking their children's health by feeding them the PCB-laced breast-milk, some mothers are substituting it with less nutritious processed milk.

Studies have shown that the level of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) in the milk are among the highest in the world, and the levels are up to five times higher than those in southern Ontario.

The PCB's are just one of many toxic chemicals polluting the once pristine Arctic environment and its inhabitants.

During the Arctic environmental protection strategy conference held in the Northwest Territories on March 21, eight polar countries agreed to the creation of an Arctic Council which will develop international pollution controls, and assess contaminants in the area.

Officials from Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden, and the United States will meet in Ottawa in April to draft the terms of reference for the Council which will be up and running by mid-July.

Terry Fenge, a member of the Canadian delegation, and executive director of the Canadian Arctic Resources Committee, said that the Council is a good initiative, but believes that more is needed in order to protect the northern environment properly.

"The Arctic region is one of the most ecologically fragile and culturally sensitive areas in the world," said Fenge. "The security of our Arctic and our citizens who live there is not threatened any more by bombers and missiles...but by pollutants."

What makes a couple?

BY ANUP GREWAL

MONTREAL (CUP) — Although David Brody feels that many gay rights have already been won in Canada, he and four other gay men in Montréal are fighting for same-sex couples' rights in the Québec courts.

The group, which is being represented by the Québec Human Rights Commission, is challenging the provincial Pension Board's refusal to grant them survival pensions after their partners died, because they had same-sex relationships.

The Board's regulations say only couples who are married or have lived together in a common-law marriage for more than three years are eligible for the pension if one of the partners dies.

But, said the Board's Norman Trottier, "the pension is only for couples of different sexes, not for those of the same-sex even if they have been living together [for the required] three years."

This doesn't make any sense to Brody.

He and his partner lived together as a couple for 23 years. They co-owned three houses in the city, they were in each other's wills, they went on vacations together, and even sponsored a young Vietnamese woman for four years.

At the tribunal, the Québec Attorney General pulled out the standard dictionary definition of a couple.

"He [the Attorney General] said a couple is a man and a woman living in a marital situation with the possibility of procreation," said Regean Lebeau, another member of the group challenging the Pension Board.

"If a couple has to be capable of having children, then if you follow this logically, if a couple decides not to have children, then they should not get the pension either, but they do," comments Brody.

"The Québec government is practicing discrimination against the regulations in its own charter, because of loopholes," he criticises.

Moreover, Brody asserts, while same-sex partners pay into the system through taxes, they don't get anything back.

Outgoing DSU prez reflects

BY JEN HORSEY

This past year, David Cox has been the President of the Dalhousie Student Union and with his term complete, he comments on some of the events that have occurred over the past year.

Much of the focus of DSU politicians this year has been internal restructuring and organization of Student Union services.

"Personally I think that students are in control of the organization again...[in previous years] it was out of touch because students weren't running it anymore, it was all management," Cox said.

Besides these improvements, he commented that not all of his campaign promises were kept — among them, reviving Cultural Diversity week, and allowing students access to the results of the survey that was conducted last summer about the Student Union and other issues.

He also expressed some concern about the degree of suspicion on-campus about the lack of information from the Student Union to the students.

"People are still sceptical when we have to do things *in camera* — there are things that can't be disclosed to people because of the responsibility that we hold," said Cox. "I wish that people would understand that. I don't think I've done a very good job of making people aware of why I can't disclose everything that they want to know."

Another big change to the student union in the past year was the DSU's withdrawal from external student organisations such as the Students' Union of Nova Scotia (SUNS) and the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS). Cox explained that one of the reasons for the DSU's movement towards becoming an "isolationist" student union was because of his focus on the internal restructuring of finances and staff.

As part of restructuring moves over the course of the year, several of the DSU's staff have been fired.

Cox stressed that the decisions made with respect to firings were with the consent of the Executive

and Council.

In January, the Student Union discovered that \$20,000 was missing from the Grawood. The Student Union fired the bar manager, but that money is still unaccounted for.

"It's a combination of poor control, you know, bad management — theft. [The \$20,000] is just something that we've had to write off," said Cox.

The Student Union transferred to Cox said that despite the loss, and due to Cross' efforts, the bar may break even at the end of the year.

Other notable firings this past year included the individuals holding the positions of Night Manager and SUB Reservations Manager.

"Why have a full-time position in there taking student jobs away? I want to create meaningful employment for students so that they have an idea of what's expected when they go out in the work force," said Cox.

The DSU has recently created a new full-time position called the Executive Administrator (EA). The addition of this position was possible after Council voted to dismiss former General Manager Steve Gaetz for reasons of poor performance. Although similar to the General Manager position, Cox stressed that the EA will be accountable to the elected student officials, and will take direction from them. Something which, allegedly, the General Manager had failed to do in past years.

"Executive Administrator' is more a term that [stresses that the person is] working for the students trying to help them get their job done," said Cox.

Outside the SUB, Cox admits that his performance was not prominent with respect to academic administration.

"It's good and bad that I didn't play a big role in academic administration," he said, "because I don't think I hold the opinion of the Union when I talk about tuition — I'd privatize the system if I had my way. I don't think the membership believes in that. So I've tried to stay away from that — because I'm opinionated."

Another of the Student Union's battles this year has been over Frosh Week. Senate voted to

cut the length of Frosh Week to four days in order to align Dalhousie's academic dates with those of other metro universities. The Student Union has been fighting to keep the length of Frosh Week at its traditional seven days.

"We haven't heard anything officially from the University about the length of Frosh Week. I think that's probably my biggest disappointment with the administration and faculty," he said. "...I hope that whenever they give us their response about how long Frosh Week is going to be, it's going to be seven days, which is what I've always wanted."

Cox said the university administration verbally agreed to let the DSU keep a seven day frosh week before he committed to campaigning in favour of the Capital Campaign in the fall.

"...Students are the biggest donors to the campaign...If any other organization had set terms for a donation, those terms would have to be met or the donation wouldn't go through," he said.

The Student Union Building (SUB) itself has also changed substantially this year. Renovations over the summer brought Pizza Hut and Robin's Donuts into the lobby. Although Cox said he is pleased that he was able to provide students with these services, "the only regret I have is that it has made the SUB look kind of like a mall...I don't regret bringing them in, it's just that Pizza Hut and Robin's look way too commercial."

Aside from the visual appearance, Cox commented that he is also displeased with the olfactory aesthetic.

"It's smelly too...Pizza Hut is smelly, isn't it?" he said.

Cox has been recently appointed to the position of Treasurer for the 1996-97 school year.

"Why the fuck did I do it?" he asked. "Because I enjoy it. I hope I can offer some continuity to the organization."

Although some students expressed displeasure about the performance of the DSU this year, and that of President Cox, he said that he would do it all again. He maintains that the decisions were ones that he thought were right for the Union, and made with an informed Executive and Council.

Restructuring high on Tory agenda

...cont'd from page 1: "TORY"

In the informal setting of the Grad House, Charest's cutting remarks about Manning and the Reform Party further indicated his unwillingness to lose the Tory status as a national party.

"And they're not a conservative party — they're a populist party," he said. "What does that mean? That means that they espouse themselves to whatever the flavour of the day is."

"Challenge him [Manning] to say, 'I am a Conservative.' He won't be able to say it. When asked, he says, 'Well, we're like a hockey team. We have a left wing, a right wing, a centre.' It's like the Ottawa Senator hockey team!" said Charest later in a short speech during Law Hour.

In response to recent talk of the possibility that he turn his attention to provincial level politics, in particular to Québec politics, Charest's answer was a definite no.

"It's never been part of my plans. When I got involved in politics, I wanted to be involved in federal politics, and I haven't changed my mind. So, I'm very committed to that and to the task of re-



GAZETTE PHOTO BY DANIELLE BOUTREAU

covering our party," he said.

The discussion turned to the current trend of government cutbacks and the phasing out of transfers to the provinces. Charest commented on the role of the right wing party during this period of transition.

"The irony is a little sweet, isn't it? And to think that we were the black heart of the company, obsessed with debt. But the numbers today tell the story!" he stated.

Charest has been visiting communities across the country holding similar conferences, with a convention finalizing the party's platform to take place in Winnipeg in August.

Charest implied that some provinces seem to be gearing up for provincial referenda to decide the unity issue and that he expects a general election campaign in a year.