

# Students criticize Newfoundland employment program

BY AMAN LABONTE

ST. JOHN'S (CUP) — The province's decision to re-invest in a student employment program has sparked criticism from leaders who say the program doesn't serve the needs of students.

In its March 22 budget, the Newfoundland government announced it would put \$2 million into the Student Work and Services Program. The program will provide

jobs for 2,000 post-secondary students this year, generally lasting 14 weeks and paying \$50 a week with a tuition voucher given out at the end.

The Ministry of Human Resources and Employment says the program, which gives students valuable work experience, has assisted over 12,000 students since 1994 and has won a national award for innovation.

But Jennifer Anthony, vice-

president external of Memorial University's student council, says she has a problem with any program that holds back a person's wages.

"I think it's great that they're trying to encourage students to save for tuition, but the sort of control that's inflicted over people using the program is really repulsive," said Anthony.

Anthony says while she thinks it's a good idea for the province to invest youth employment

programs, the implications of the SWASP positions "are just ridiculous."


"The government has known that student leaders have been protesting against SWASP for years and anti-poverty activists have been protesting against SWASP for years and they're simply not listening to any of that," she added.

Allison North, chair-elect of the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Students, says the SWASP positions don't account for students living independently.

"From the people I've been talking to, SWASP programs can be beneficial to some students, no doubt," she said. "For the most part they are somewhat unrealistic for many independent students, in that the weekly pay covers little or none of their living expenses."

She adds that unless the recipients have another form of employment, the SWASP program doesn't ease the burden of the cost of a post-secondary education, particularly for students who have dependants.

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