

Student Centre fears competition from York Lanes

by Mark Wright

The Student Centre Corporation (SCC) has decided to delay any formal action against the university over what it sees as a violation of its 1988 agreement with the university over limiting the number of food outlets in York Lanes.

"We had filed a formal dispute with the provost but agreed to hold off so that the university could be given a chance to respond," said SCC manager Robert Castle. Last spring, then SCC vice-chair Mourad Mardikian threatened that legal action might be necessary to resolve the dispute. Castle now says that will be a last resort.

"We were never calling for a lawsuit. We were calling for a meeting of a joint committee which would settle the dispute as outlined in the Management Agreement," Castle said.

The Management Agreement is the document between the university and the SCC which defines how each organization shall conduct itself in relation to the other and requires that each keep the other informed of its business intentions.

The dispute surrounds the recent approval of the York Lanes mall by the university and the inclusion of commercial food outlets which the SCC claims

would be in direct competition with those of the Student Centre. The SCC will get a percentage of its food court tenants' gross earnings and will rely heavily on profits from the food court to help meet operating costs, and to help pay off the its mortgage.

The SCC claims that such competition will decrease its revenues from the food court which could force up the Student Centre levy, now at \$9 per course for every York undergraduate, and that it would be "contrary to the spirit, intent, and letter of the Management Agreement".

The SCC claims that last year it had a commitment from the university, as well as assurances from then provost Tom Meininger, that there would be no food outlets in York Lanes, except for one full service sit-down restaurant. The leasing agent for the York University Development Corporation (YUDC) subsequently claimed that it was not bound by any agreement between the university and the SCC.

"Our interpretation of the Management Agreement was that there wouldn't be any direct food competition," said SCC treasurer Chia-Yi Chua, "and it was with that understanding in mind that we have agreements with our tenants."

He added that now a few of the tenants had already approached them and were considering with-



The site of the York Lanes development

drawing or changing their agreements.

YUDC director of development Ron Hunt does not feel that York Lanes' food outlets will be directly competing with the Student Centre but will be adding a broader choice.

"I think the Student Centre and York Lanes will complement one another. They're using a food court concept which involves fast food and lines, but we're intending

to have in place seating," Hunt said.

Hunt said that York Lanes will contain Tastes Inc. (a frozen yogurt outlet), Little Caesar's, Companies Coming and Cinnamon's. The mall will also contain Yin Yang, a Chinese food outlet.

The Student Centre food court tenants are Yogen Fruz, Panzerotto and Pizza, Treats, Manchu Wok, Kentucky Fried Chicken,

Wendy's and Caraway's delicatessen.

Vice-president (finance and administration) Bill Farr presented the SCC with a proposal on December 21 in the hopes of resolving the dispute but chose not to comment on it at present.

Castle said the SCC met Monday to discuss the proposal but said he was not at liberty to speak about it in great detail. However, he suggested the proposal included the possibility of a subsidy if the SCC's food court revenues were to be seriously affected by competition from food outlets in York Lanes.

"There is a question of whether the subsidy would be sufficient, but that's not the point. We shouldn't require one since the whole purpose of the Centre was to be self-sufficient," Castle said.

"If there is one glaring concern it was the commitment that the university had given us and we wanted to address that point. If anything proves to be a stumbling block it will be that," he said.

"We've got nothing against York Lanes or food outlets," said Chua, "just those that are in direct competition. It's a student investment and if you undermine it you're not showing much respect for the students."

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