

THE GAZETTE

DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY

Closing out

By ERIN GOODMAN

The chair of the volunteer board that runs a short-term emergency shelter for women in Halifax says the house is closing due to lack of demand, but a spokesperson for a single-mothers group says that's just not true.

Collins House, established in 1983 to provide women and their children shelter due to marital breakdown, fire, and eviction accepted its last occupant by January 30, and will close officially on February 13th.

Donna MacCready, Chair of the volunteer board that administers the house, explains the original incentive to establish the shelter 5 years ago. "The housing situation was so desperate at that time, people simply didn't have a place to go."

The long waiting list of women requiring the services at Collins House had disappeared by 1985, says MacCready, and throughout the following year the shelter was rarely full to capacity. By spring of 1986, the situation was "looking quite serious financially", and the municipality granted the board deficit funding for three months while they assessed the possibility of closure.

"Funding is tied to occupancy," says MacCready. She explains that occupancy had dropped dramatically in the fall, leaving only nine women in an institution with a capacity of 28 by December. She attributes the decreased demand for shelter to a slight increase in social assistance available to women recently, (about \$7/month) and a drop in migration to the Halifax area since 1983.

Says MacCready, "Women with children will (now) find a place to live," she adds, "Our delivery system was no longer effective." She is confident the several women remaining at the shelter will benefit from the housing search assistance offered at Collins House, and be able to find housing by February 13.

But Johanna Cromwell, a member of Mothers United for Metro Shelter, disagrees with MacCready's and the board decision to close the shelter.

"I think it's a darn shame that they are closing Collins House down. Where are women supposed to go now? You can only get into Bryony House if you are battered, and Adsum House will

take women who don't have a place to go, but they won't take children," says Cromwell.

Cromwell says a woman called the MUMS last week, saying she had been told there was a long waiting list to get into Collins House. "But I was there just awhile ago, and there were only four women there. But we don't know who told her there was a long list."

The MUMS are worried that Collins House is closing too quickly, without realizing the impact its closure will have on women in the metro area.

"Two or three months down the road, just wait and see, there will be more problems for women. Where are they going to go. I think they should leave Collins House opened," says Cromwell.

The MUMS also wondered what will become of the shelter once it shuts its doors. "Are they going to turn it into a rooming house, or change it into apartments? And if so, will they rent to single mothers?" asks Cromwell.

The full and part-time paid staff at the house will be searching for new employment as of the 13th, when they will be laid-off. "They've been the hardest hit," says MacCready. "It's been a very stressful year for them."



Career-students dig in for an academic summer as job prospects dwindle. Photo by Scot Campbell/Dal Photo

Charter bus service

By GEOFF STONE

A joint proposal by student unions at three Halifax universities and the Students' Union of Nova Scotia to provide a chartered bus service may relieve some students but union officials are not happy about it.

Because Metro Transit officials refused to go to binding arbitration in their contract dispute with the commission's drivers and maintenance workers, Halifax students may have to depend on car pools, trekking through the slush and, possibly, the proposed bus service to travel to and from classes.

The bus service is expected to run four times a day, stopping at five places en route, including Mount St. Vincent, Mumford Road terminal, the ferry terminal, Dalhousie and Saint Mary's.

SUNS accepted financial responsibility for the project after it was originally proposed by Mount St. Vincent business representative Mike Corkum. Although students will be charged one dollar per trip, SUNS is expecting to lose about \$50 out of the \$250 the service will cost each day.

Art Beaver, chief negotiator for the transit union, is sceptical about the planned service and says they "wouldn't encourage it" because it would reduce pressure on transit officials to come to an agreement with the union.

The possibility of problems between the transit union and the student service was discussed at a recent executive meeting of the Dalhousie student union. Vice president Sandra Bell said later: "We're being very careful about that... our concern is students." She says the DSU also plans to set up a car pool board in the student union building.

According to SUNS chair Barney Savage, the bus service won't be able to help more than just a handful of students: "The main purpose is to service those students absolutely in need."

More students, fewer jobs

HALIFAX (CUP) — Student leaders in Atlantic Canada say high regional summer unemployment rates for returning students won't drop unless governments spend more money on job creation.

Although the student summer unemployment declined in parts of the country last year, this wasn't the case in Atlantic Canada. In fact, more students appear to be looking for fewer jobs.

In Nova Scotia, for example, the returning student unemployment rate was 22.6 per cent last year, up from 20.3 per cent in 1985. In Newfoundland, nearly 30 per cent of returning students did not find work last summer.

Student leaders criticize programs of past years, saying too few jobs were created and those that were created were low-paying and too short.

More than 3,000 Nova Scotia students have so far signed a petition organized by the Students'

Union of Nova Scotia, which is calling on the Buchanan government to increase its summer employment funding to 1984 levels.

The jobless rate for returning students dropped to 15.9 per cent the election year of 1984, when the Nova Scotia government spent \$14 million on its summer employment program. In other recent years, the government only spent between \$5 million and \$6 million per year on its program.

Last year, Nova Scotia paid participants in its program \$4 per hour for 15 weeks of work. Although SUNS chair Barney Savage agrees students can't save much with these wages, he said SUNS is not pushing for better paying jobs because fewer positions would be created.

In Prince Edward Island, students must rely solely on federal job grants because the provincial government does not offer a

summer employment program. Paul Ledwell, the Canadian Federation of Students representative for P.E.I., says there is no shortage of jobs during the peak tourist trade.

"However, jobs only last eight weeks and pay \$4 and \$5 an hour," he said, adding minimum wages make it nearly impossible to save the 45 to 60 per cent of summer income that student aid programs say they must save.

In Newfoundland, the number of students who attend university in the summer is among the highest in Canada. John Reid, president of the student union of Memorial university, sees this a direct result of the shortage of summer jobs.

"There are too many students looking for too few jobs," he said. "Students are becoming increasingly demoralized because unemployment has become a way of life in Newfoundland."