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Government requests study on incidental fees

By WAYNE WASSER

The provincial government has ordered a report on university incidental fees due to a concern these fees may be reducing the accessibility of Ontario universities.

Gregory Sorbara, Minister of Colleges and Universities, ordered the report from the Ontario Council on University Affairs (OCUA). Marnie Paikin, Chairperson for the OCUA, said Sorbara requested the report as the result of "new fees being levied in placed they had not been before."

Sheldon Levy, York's Associate Vice-President of Management Information and Planning, who is in charge of gathering data for the OCUA's report, said, "The government has been sending out noises, since 1982, to the universities to be cautious in what they are charging as incidental fees. However," he added, "it's not a threat, it's just an indication that the Ministry is concerned."

Because of the recent granting of the "Excellence Fund," \$50-million to be distributed by the government to Ontario universities, Sorbara asked that all new proposed incidental fees be postponed until the OCUA's submission has been received. At that point, it will be

decided whether or not the government must act on the issue.

CYSF President Reya Ali explained that incidental fees are one way for universities to recover costs without potentially cutting back on operating grants. Operating grants, he said, are the budgets provided by the ministry within which the universities must operate. These grants are determined by a funding formula which provides a provincially set limit to tuition fees. Universities are presently allowed to charge up to 10 percent above that limit without reducing their operating grants.

Therefore, Ali said, incidental fees are "one way of collecting extra money without increasing (tuition) fees directly."

Paikin declined to comment on the effect that frozen tuition levels have had on increasing incidental fees, but said, "council (OCUA) has made it very clear to the Ministry that it feels that operating grants have been insufficient for almost 10 years."

Among incidental fees charged to York students are materials fees paid at registration time, which, for students in the Faculty of Arts, is \$4.00 per full course. That charge, how-

ever, is only the beginning, and an average arts student can expect to spend much more in his academic career. To begin, many courses in political science, sociology, social science and english provide students with photocopied reading kits, which can cost over \$10.00 per kit. In languages and sciences there are lab fees, and fine arts has studio lab fees of up to \$75.00 per course. The film department charges \$200.00 in incidental fees in some courses.

There is, at York, almost virtual freedom of faculties to charge incidental fees as they fit, according to Levy. "I think that there should be at the centre of the university a very comprehensive fee policy that doesn't allow individual units, without prior authorization, to set fees," he said, adding, "When the faculty wants to introduce a new one, they should have to go through an approval mechanism."

The OCUA report will be submitted to York's Budget Planning Subcommittee, in addition to being submitted to the government. The data will be analyzed by the YBPS and recommendations will be sent to the President's Policy Committee, which will, at that time, implement any necessary policy changes.

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TTC.

According to CYSF President Reya Ali, the study should be completed by March, at which point he will try to solicit support for the program from various government ministries, and from politicians at the municipal and provincial levels.

Mayor Art Eggleton has already written a letter of support to Julian Porter, the chairman of the TTC. That letter states, in part, "I believe that this submission should be given serious consideration. Thus, I hope that you will have time within the next month to sit down with myself and representatives of the U of T Students' Administrative Council to discuss their proposal."

As well as Eggleton's support, the proposal has, according to Ali, received the support of North York Mayor Mel Lastman and Toronto Alderman Jack Layton.

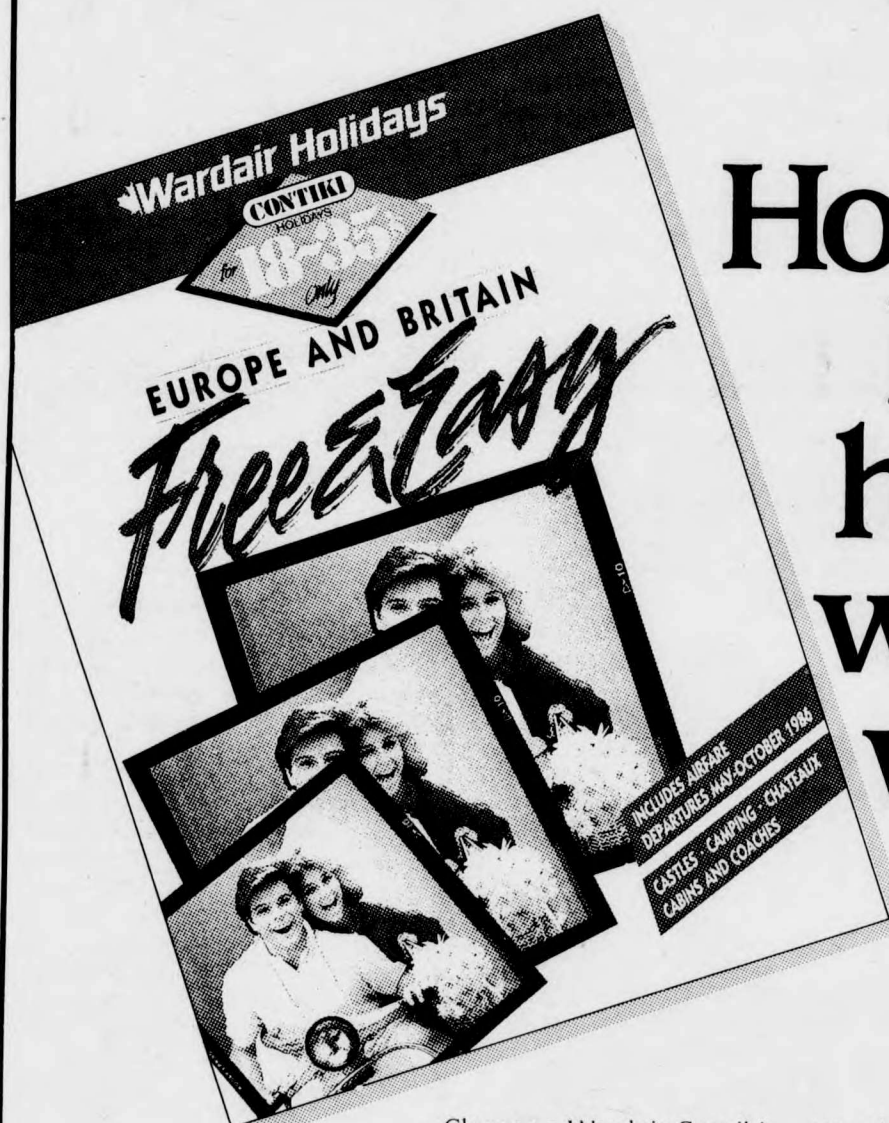
Ali said that the TTC receives 68% of its revenues from fares, and that is a much higher percentage than transit systems in other cities in North America. He said that an objective of the proposal is to lower that figure to 60% and have the government pick up the additional eight per cent.

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not the many commuter students. We at Calumet feel that we fulfill a vital need for our commuter students. We recognize the restrictions that our present physical situation places on the activities that our college can provide for the members of the college. In all fairness though the college has received an extremely high participation rate from the members in such areas as sports, social activities and government. In addition Calumet college has proved itself as a leader in bringing up concerns of social awareness and education in the issues that surround our students everyday. It is impossible to say that every government is infallible but mistakes are part of life and hopefully we grow and learn from them.

The author's call for the construction of a central student facility is not a new experience at York. I feel however, that the wishes of the student body were heard quite plainly during the referendum this time last year. The majority of York students are happy with the way their colleges work. If the author feels that there should be construction facilities for commuter students then a suitable area for his energies should be a Calumet College building.

—Ken McCrimmon
External Affairs Officer
Calumet College General Meeting



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