

# Lexicon may seek student levy

"it's a joke that we're expected to do what we do on our budget."

by Daniel Wolgelerenter

**B**ethune's college news paper may be asking York students for money in order to maintain current levels

of service and to become a campus-wide paper independent of Bethune College Council (BCC).

Editor of *The Lexicon*, John Montesano said the paper, which publishes once every two weeks,

may ask for a referendum to get about \$1 per student. He said the paper must decide by February 5 whether to submit a proposal to the Board of Referendum on the issue.

*Excalibur* currently receives \$4 per full-time student.

"We're not looking to get huge. We just want to come out regularly and keep doing what we've been doing," he said. "We're not asking for a lot of money either. About \$15,000 to \$20,000 would be nice."

Montesano said the paper needs money to be independent from BCC because it is uncertain how much money the council will be able to provide the paper on a year to year basis. He said he would like to see all college papers independent of their college councils so that they would not feel responsible to them and therefore would have more freedom to report on events.

"We're looking for something more established. I don't want to see the paper start from scratch every year," Montesano said.

"The way the paper works right now, it's a joke that we're expected to do what we do on our budget."

Last year, *The Lexicon* lost its bid to secure \$1,500 to \$2,000 from the CYSF and be classified as a central student service. The paper considered holding a referendum last year but did not.

Montesano said the paper currently operates on a budget of "about \$15,000 of which about \$8,000 comes from BCC and about \$7,000 comes from advertising."

The issue must be addressed by BCC before it can go to referendum, he said, because the council would have to take the paper out of its constitution. He

said the ties to Bethune would not be entirely broken because the paper would likely remain in the college and occupy the same office.

BCC president Chia-Yi Chua said the council has not discussed the matter yet because it wants to "solicit more student input" before reaching a conclusion. Chua himself was not enthusiastic.

"I'm hesitant and reluctant to see it happen," Chua said. He said a move to separate by *The Lexicon* would affect both the paper and the council. Chua will not comment further on the issue until the council takes a stand. The BCC will be meeting to discuss the issue on Friday.

The extra money gained from a referendum would be used to hire a production manager and a business manager and to make the editor's position full time, Montesano said. He said he currently makes about \$2,000 as editor but that \$5-6,000 would be a better figure.

"We're not going to spend more than 50 per cent of our budget on salaries and commissions the way *Excalibur* does," he said. With the money from students, Montesano said, *The Lexicon* could firmly establish itself as a second campus paper. Without the money, the paper could revert to being a monthly, like other college papers. He added that the paper wants the money to continue publishing bi-weekly.

Associate editor Cathy Sgro said, however, that the proposed levy may allow the paper to publish weekly.

Montesano said that a second campus-wide paper is overdue for York.

"For a university of this size, it's a real disservice to have only one

campus-wide newspaper," he said. Most urban campuses, he said, have at least two campus-wide papers funded by students. He used McGill as an example, where students fund both *The McGill Daily* and the weekly *Tribune*.

The *Tribune* is published by the McGill Student Society (MSS) once a week and negotiates a subsidy from the MSS each year. This year, it received a \$500 subsidy with the rest of its estimated \$80,000 budget coming from advertising.

The *Daily* is funded by direct levy from students, depending on their programme and number of courses they take. The paper's budget is about \$300,000 with only about one third coming from students.

"I think it's a question of asking for another voice on campus," Montesano said. "The more information available to students on campus issues the better."

"One of the most unfortunate things about York is that students on this campus have been getting only one avenue for news," said Montesano. "It's surprising that *Excalibur* has been the only newspaper here for over 20 years."

He said *The Lexicon* and *Excalibur* have different approaches to covering news and that the difference in perspective offered by his paper offsets the question of duplication of services between the two papers.

"We believe that the student press has a role as agents of social change," he said.

"One of the reasons we have a different approach is we're bi-weekly and have more time to work on our news section. We can go into more depth," he said.

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