

NEWS

# Disabled student unable to attend classes



photo by Clive Cohen

Joanne Doucette is filing a human rights grievance against York.

by Brent Poland

A disabled York student has stung York University administration by exposing her grievances to nation-wide media.

Joanne Doucette, a disabled student has filed a human rights complaint with the Ontario Human Rights Commission against York University and President Arthurs.

Doucette, who suffers from genetic, muscular and arthritic disorders in her knees is unable to gain access to the second and third floors of the fine arts building phase II.

The only elevator available to her would be a freight elevator, which the elevator devices branch of Ministry of Consumer and Commercial relations has forbidden her to use.

"I am not going to wait six years

for the human rights complaint to go through," Doucette said.

Doucette has received attention from the media including the Toronto Star and the CBC. As well she has rallied the support of York Federation of Students, York Women's Center, Disabled Womens Network, Creative Arts Board and ABLE, an organization of York students with disabilities.

"I would be very happy if the university said, 'Yes Joanne you're right, we will put in an elevator by this date and in the mean time we will make these arrangements so that disabled students can get an education'," Doucette said.

According to Harriet Lewis, legal counsel for the university, an elevator in phase II of the fine arts building is not an option right now. Lewis said that money is not available for a project of this size. "To date we have not been able

to rise to Ms Doucette's expectation of what is required," Lewis said. "we acknowledge that the building is faulty and we apologize."

According to Lewis, the grants received from the government didn't go very far.

Last year the university spent \$30,000 of a government grant to upgrade the university. Washrooms were made accessible, braille signs were placed in elevators, a new pool lift and upgrading the change rooms in Tait. A ramp is also in the process of being completed for Steadman Lecture Halls.

"We stretched the money out through the whole university so that it would benefit a large number of disabled people" said Lewis.

Ron Pethick, president of

ABLE, agrees with Doucette's complaint.

"A person who pays the same tuition as the rest of us, is prevented from equal accessibility to education" Pethick said. "The university is saying that they would rather spend money to build new buildings, than to make existing ones accessible to all students."

Doucette first approached the Office for Persons with Disabilities before enrolling at York. The coordinator of the office, Ilanna Yuditsky said that Doucette was advised of the problem with the fine arts building.

Yuditsky proposed interim solutions to help Doucette deal with the inadequacies of the building. The solutions included providing a studio and a locker on the ground floor, video taping

lectures and providing student volunteers.

"Joanne feels she is being undignified, she wants to be treated like a human being," Yuditsky said.

Yuditsky agreed with Lewis that the money is not available to build the elevator. Yuditsky stated that no university or college is fully accessible to disabled students.

"York University is one of the leaders in accommodating disabled students, but accommodation is not integration," Yuditsky said. "The university has a long way to go and Joanne is a good model for students to see what self-advocacy is all about."

The university has in the meantime proposed modifications to the existing elevator or an electric chair lift.

## A New Feminist Paper

by Linda Kingston

The first York Feminist Press may become a reality.

The Women's Studies Research Group recently proposed to create the York University Centre for Feminist Research, and a new Feminist Press.

Shelagh Wilkinson, director designate of the Women Studies Research Group suggested combining the Feminist Press with the existing Canadian Woman Studies/Les Cahiers de la Femme (CWS) journal.

"The idea of a Feminist Press is the marriage of the YUCFR and the CWS," said Carol Greene, editor of the bilingual feminist jour-

nal. "This will aid in distributing the work."

The York Feminist Press would generate income from several areas. These would include:

- a feminist fact book to be available to Women's Studies students nationally
- Class sets of feminist documents, articles, current research, conference findings that are unavailable in other forms.
- the development of a journal that would showcase Canadian feminist scholarship
- a line of resource papers for government, industry and institutions that are engaged in: pay equity, affirmative action, gender analysis, and the eradication of all forms of harassment.

The Feminist Press would work out of the journal's office because lack of space. Essentially, the press would be the expansion of the journal.

The publication will have to do a lot of ad hoc fund raising along with sales and subscriptions. The main focus will be on individual donations appeals to private fund-

ing agencies and government ministries.

"Part of our mandate was that we get into publishing, so far we have not published anything outside of the Journal," said Marion Lynn, a member of the editorial board of CWS. "We have been fighting for our lives because we have had our funding cut by the government."

Through a university program, researchers [faculty members] receive extra funding if they hire a York student for external research.

York University has been a leader in the development of Women's Studies in Canada. The Women's Studies Research Group argues that it "cannot afford to be without a Research Centre to maintain and enhance its position in the field."

Wilkinson, who was unavailable for comment, took the position of director designate after a sabbatical. She has been invited to Ottawa to meet with the Commonwealth ministers responsible for Women's Affairs.

This contact will draw attention to York's resources on feminist issues.

### For Pete's Sake... by Peter Roe



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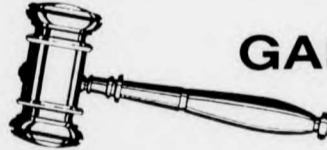
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