

Student Centre over budget, but student levy won't increase

by Mark Wright and Daniel Wolgelerenter

The Student Centre is \$2.3 million over budget.

Construction costs, budgeted last February at \$16 million for the project, have increased to about \$18.4 million, said Student Centre Corporation (SCC) chairperson Mourad Mardikian.

The SCC will be taking out a new mortgage of about \$12.6 million at 11.25 per cent for 30 years instead of the originally projected \$10.6 million at 12 per cent over 40 years. The remaining \$300,000 (approximately) will come from increased capital contributions from York and the Centre's tenants, Mardikian said.

The extra \$2 million in mortgage payments, said Mardikian, will be covered by the student levy which will give more money to the SCC with increased enrolment next year, and by increases in food court revenues which were not projected in the last budget. He said that revenue estimates for the food court in the last budget were "very conservative" and that the SCC is now expecting about \$250,000 more a year in revenues from the court.

"Students are not going to have to pay more in any way [under the new financing plan]," Mardikian said. The plan will be presented for approval by the Board of Governors at its next meeting in December.

The Centre's original budget

was \$14.5 million. It was forced up by changes in market conditions that increased construction costs, and by new demands by the university, such as the construction of part of a covered colonnade to link the Centre with the Ross building.

Mardikian blames the Toronto construction market for the latest increase.

"It's a contractor's market," he said. "Just look at what happened with the SkyDome." Mardikian explained that in a stable market, there are many contractors bidding on jobs but Toronto does not have a stable market. He said that in Toronto there is so much construction happening that there are not enough contractors to go around.

The result, he said, has been that contracts that have gone out for tendering have come back with costs higher than originally projected by the SCC. One project, which Mardikian would not identify, was budgeted at \$250,000 but the contract came in at \$1.2 million. Other contracts have experienced similar overruns.

Mardikian said the SCC has long exhausted the \$2 million contingency fund set aside in the last budget, which was intended to cover such overruns.

"Estimates done before construction begin are difficult to predict. Every project [on campus] is suffering overruns," he said.

Students have been paying \$9 a

course up to this point to fund the construction costs and Mardikian doesn't expect this levy to increase at all. He also said that the levy's collection period, currently 40 years, will not be extended as a result of the increase.

Mardikian said increased enrolment, which the university has said is coming, will make an increase in the levy unnecessary.

Mardikian said the SCC cannot guarantee that the Centre's cost will stay at \$18.3 million because not all the construction contracts have been given out yet. However, these contracts are minor ones, he said.

He said the original plans for the Centre's construction "will not be changed in any way at all" as a result of cost overruns. He pointed out that the Centre's design had recently won the *Canadian Architectural Magazine's* highest award, the Award of Excellence. Mardikian said the design would not be compromised in any way at all as a result of the overruns despite \$3 million to \$4 million in cost-cutting measures that have been instituted since the original budget.

Mardikian stressed that his recent resignation was not related to the cost overruns, but that it was "for purely personal reasons" which he would not detail. Mardikian will continue as SCC chairperson until the end of the month, at which time a successor will be selected by the SCC board.

Security guards charged with assault

by Daniel Wolgelerenter

Two York security guards have been charged with assault in connection with a September 9 incident at 4 Assiniboine Rd.

The charges were laid in a private complaint by Dean Adema, a third year Osgoode student, against Rachid Ennafati and Edward Ciamtar of security's D squad. Adema was arrested and charged with two counts of assault by Ennafati and Ciamtar at his apartment after they responded to a noise complaint.

Adema allegedly pushed the two security officers with a closed fist after they allegedly harassed guests leaving his party. Adema has alleged that he was threatened with physical harm by one of the officers and then arrested when he continued protesting their harassment of his guests.

The major daily security report at the time reported that only one officer was "verbally and physically abused" by Adema.

The two officers will appear in provincial court at 1000 Finch on November 22 to set a trial date. Adema is scheduled to appear in court on October 26 but his lawyer, Bryan Heller, said his pre-trial date would probably be postponed to November 22 in order to deal with the two cases simultaneously.

Neither Adema or Heller would

comment further on the case while Ciamtar and Ennafati were unavailable for comment.

Interim security director Pam MacDonald said she had not heard of the charges and did not know if the officers had even been served with summons. She said the officers would not be suspended as a result of the charges.

"Just because someone has laid charges does not necessarily lead to action being taken against the officers unless the charges have any substance," MacDonald said. "Anybody can go and charge any body with anything."

She added that an internal investigation done by security at the time of the incident showed the officers acted in a "professional manner."

Adema told *Excalibur* in September that the two officers used handcuffs to restrain him during his arrest. Security denied the charge.

Adema said that he spent the night in jail after being handed over to Metro Police who charged him based on security's account of the incident.

The two officers are members of the squad formerly headed by Rob Hughes who was fired last month for authorizing the use of handcuffs against university regulations in an incident August 17.



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