

Health plan passes referendum

BY SHELLEY ROBINSON

13 percent of Dal students voted in a referendum passing a new health plan.

Of the 1644 students who voted at polling stations across campus last Wednesday and Thursday, 1386 voted in favour of the plan.

For an additional \$96.25 a year it automatically covers 80 percent of all drugs and incidental hospital care up to \$5,000 for all full-time students.

Students with existing coverage may elect to opt-out and receive their money back.

Dalhousie Student Union president Ted Chiasson says the plan is a good one.

"What we're proposing isn't new or revolutionary, it's just a benefit to students," he said.

Chiasson says the relatively low voter turnout was not uncommon for a fall vote. And he estimates 95 percent of students knew the referendum was happening.

"There were polling booths all over campus, you couldn't move without tripping over them. If, after all of that, you chose not to vote — that's your choice."

Chiasson says he plans to

advertise the rebate as heavily as he advertised the referendum itself.

"If [people] are aware of [the rebate] and just don't do anything about it — that's a tax on laziness and I don't have a problem with that."

The plan does not cover smoking cessation programs like the patch or nicotine gum, fertility treatments or topical aids to reduce male pattern baldness.

The opt-out clause only applies to students with pre-existing coverage. But Chiasson says students who have no insurance, but still don't want to fork over the cash to join "should have voted no."

"I think most people realize this is a benefit," he said. "You always hear 'I'm broke, unemployed — but at least I've got my health.' By saying no to this health plan you'd be saying 'I don't care about my health — but at least I've got my ninety-six bucks.'"

Provincial deficit

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going to suffer."

Education minister Robbie Harrison says the government is committed to the \$23.8-million increase.

"We have made a long-term commitment to strengthen post-secondary education funding in Nova Scotia," he said.

"Major policy shifts are not warranted by the ups and downs of quarterly reports."

Harrison says the significance of a small deficit — which he blames on unforeseen factors like the poor dollar and an over-run in health — has been overblown.

"In a \$4.4-billion budget, a deficit in the twenties of millions is not cause for grave concern," he said.

"We will take steps to ride out these bumps in the road... but we have no intention of changing course."

Unapologetic author

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"I think it's a very good piece," he said. "He put it out there and now he'll learn from it and others will learn from it."

"That's why we have the freedom of the press."

But Tim Boudreau, editor-in-chief of *The Picaro*, says he feels it's necessary to apologize because of the number of people the article offended.

"I've learned that I have to be a lot more careful," he said. "I honestly believe this is a case where something slipped through the cracks. If I had taken the time to look at it more carefully it would not have happened."

The Picaro received about

ten direct responses about the article, and while the majority were negative, Boudreau says he did receive a few positive responses.

But this may be the last time Brown is offered the chance to challenge the boundaries of acceptable journalism. Boudreau says in the future, he will have to pay more attention to Brown's work than anyone else's.

But Brown says he did not provoke as much debate as he hoped.

"I'm disgruntled because most people are just calling me names — from the second coming of Marc Lepine to my personal favourite: the anti-Christ."

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Global tuition rates

BY FRANK SATUSKY
TORONTO (CUP) —

education include Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, and Norway.

Canada is no longer one of the cheaper places in the world to attend university, despite the federal government's agreement 20 years ago to work towards eliminating tuition fees altogether.

Today, an undergraduate degree averages around \$3,200 nationally, up from \$1,438 in 1990.

Tuition fees have been steadily increasing in recent years even though in 1976, Canada signed a United Nations Covenant agreeing to begin eliminating tuition fees — a pledge many student leaders say has clearly been ignored.

According to the Canadian Federation of Students, Canada is one of a small number of countries that have raised tuition rates over the past few years.

Of the 29 member nations of the Organization for Economic Development, only 12 charge tuition fees, and the average cost of a university degree is only higher in the United States and Japan than in Canada.

Countries that do not charge any tuition fees for post-secondary

And students in some of those countries have to pay only education-related costs such as materials and some administrative fees, the federation says.

In France, for instance, the total average fee students are required to pay amounts to \$150 (Cdn).

Until recently, the United Kingdom was one of the countries that could boast low tuition fees. However, the Labour government has recently passed legislation to charge students the equivalent of about \$1,500 (Cdn) annually for post-secondary education.

In the United States, the most expensive country in the world to attend university, undergraduate tuition averages around \$4,600 (Cdn) a year. The U.S. — much like Ontario today — doesn't regulate university fees, leading to a wide discrepancy in tuition fees among institutions.

The countries that do not charge tuition fees fund universities through other means, such as higher taxation.

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