

NEWS

Ontario universities propose raising tuition \$550

by Peter Stathis

The Council of Ontario Universities (COU) has proposed a \$550 increase in annual tuition fees as part of a "recovery plan" to improve the quality of post-secondary education.

The proposed increase would mark a 35-40 per cent rise in the average cost of undergraduate tuition in Ontario.

An official from the Ministry of Colleges and Universities, however, said it would be unlikely that the NDP would accept an increase in tuition given the current economic climate.

According to the new plan, students already enrolled in university would receive automatic credits to alleviate the \$550 recovery fee, while incoming students, and those changing their programs, would be eligible for increased Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP).

"The recovery plan is basically a better version of the Queen's Paper [of 1989]," said Sheldon Levy, vp institutional affairs at York.

According to Levy, the COU proposal would ask the NDP government to provide \$2 of funding for each \$1 in additional fees paid by students.

The resulting \$410-million increase would stretch over the next four years, \$273-million of which would be borne by the provincial government and \$137-million to be paid out of student fees.

Badly underfunded

According to Bob Kanduth, communications assistant to the minister of colleges and universities, COU's assessment of how much money Ontario universities require is realistic.

However, he cautioned that his office would not approve any funding increases until January when it makes its submission to the treasurer.

"The [education] system is badly underfunded and it does need an injection, but this number [\$410-million] cannot be guaranteed [by the government]," Kanduth said.

According to Levy, the government should ideally pay the entire cost of tuition. However, because the government and private sectors have not adequately supported universities, the COU has had to examine more drastic measures.

"The government has not fulfilled their responsibility," Levy said. "When we look further ahead, we see bleak times, so now we're looking at desperate options to turn the system around and provide what everyone deserves."

According to COU spokesperson and York president, Harry Arthurs, the plan has three objectives.

- * to improve the quality of educational experience
- * to maintain the current level of accessibility
- * to provide special access to disadvantaged and under-represented groups

The proposal calls for students to become bigger participants in paying for their education. In simple terms, those who have

more money will pay the higher tuition, while those who don't have enough will receive loans and grants as compensation.

The proposal would set aside one quarter of the recovery funds (\$25-million per year for the next four years) to promote under-represented groups from high school to register for university.

Dog & pony show

Chris Lawson, campaign researcher for the Ontario Federation of Students (OFS), calls this special access funding a "dog and pony show" that treats the symptoms of the problem but does not address the more deeply-rooted problems that lead to a disinterest in university.

York Federation of Students (YFS) President Jean Ghomeshi condemned the recovery plan as well as the lack of student consultation during the creation of the proposal.

Ghomeshi was sceptical that raising the cost of tuition to stu-

dents could possibly provide them with more accessibility.

"This is an attack on accessibility to education under the pretext of benefitting all students," Ghomeshi said.

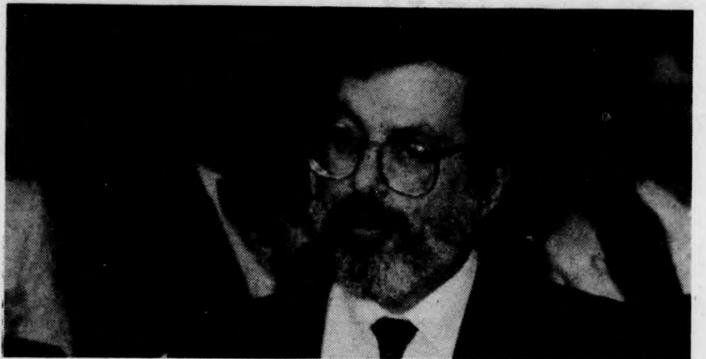
Ghomeshi told *Excalibur* that he would mobilize York students to lobby against the plan as well as against the lack of student input on York campus when students return in January.

"Any mass campaigning would be difficult at this time," Ghomeshi said. "The COU was banking on this because students are now overburdened by exams to effectively respond."

Levy sympathized with Ghomeshi's feelings about being left out. However, he said that the proposal should be considered a working document, not a final product.

"We're expecting considerable input from students on the plan we've developed," Levy said.

According to Lawson the recovery plan is a "tired and old



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Harry Arthurs, York president, announced the COU's proposal to bring in \$410-million.

song" which asks the government to save universities by sacrificing students. Lawson also attacked the COU's claims that OSAP could compensate students for the increase in tuition.

"Given its track record, OSAP is in need of a complete overhaul before we try to repair the universities themselves," Lawson said.

The recovery plan represents the COU's attempt to deal with a

decade of chronic underfunding in Ontario universities.

Although tuition fees presently cover between 18-20 per cent of university operating costs, the proposal would level this figure off between 23-25 per cent.

Ontario currently provides \$800 per student less than the average of other Canadian provinces and ranks ninth in terms of overall support to its universities.

Labatt's Blue Tunes Trivia Contest

1 In Birmingham they loved the governor

1. Georgia Satellites
2. David Wilcox
3. Lynyrd Skynyrd
4. The Doors

2 Driving home this evening, I coulda swore we had it all worked out

1. Colin James
2. Bryan Adams
3. Corey Hart
4. Burton Cummings

3 They don't give a damn about any trumpet playing band

1. The Kinks
2. The Beatles
3. The Police
4. Dire Straits

4 Keep on whispering to my ear, tell me all the things that I wanna hear

1. The Romantics
2. The Ramones
3. Iggy Pop
4. Lou Reed

5 Way out in the cornfields where the woods got heavy

1. Bob Dylan
2. Bob Marley
3. Bob Seger
4. Bob Geldof

6 She's a good girl crazy 'bout Elvis

1. Eddie Money
2. Travelling Wilburys
3. Glass Tiger
4. Tom Petty

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