

news

Future referendum possible

Health care fee to rise

by Tom Schneider

Full-time students will pay higher fees for health insurance this fall and may face a referendum for larger increases next year, the York student federation says.

There is a strong possibility a referendum will be held sometime in October or November, Nikki Gershbain, a vice president of the York Federation of Students said last week.

The Blue Cross plan—which all full-time students pay along with tuition—was introduced last September after a successful 1989 referendum. The plan covers 100 per cent of the costs of prescription drugs, oral contraceptives and several other benefits.

Collecting fees from students was a problem this past year, according to David Taylor, the federation's health care plan administrator.

The federation simply asked students to add the \$52.08 fee to their tuition themselves last year. This proved to be a very inefficient method of collection, said Taylor.

"A lot of people didn't even know about [the plan]," and therefore did not pay the fee, he added.

Taylor said that of the 90 per cent of full time students expected to pay for the plan, "less than 50 per cent actually did so," which meant Blue Cross "lost a lot of money [with the York account]."

This year the plan's premium will be automatically included with tuition. Students covered by

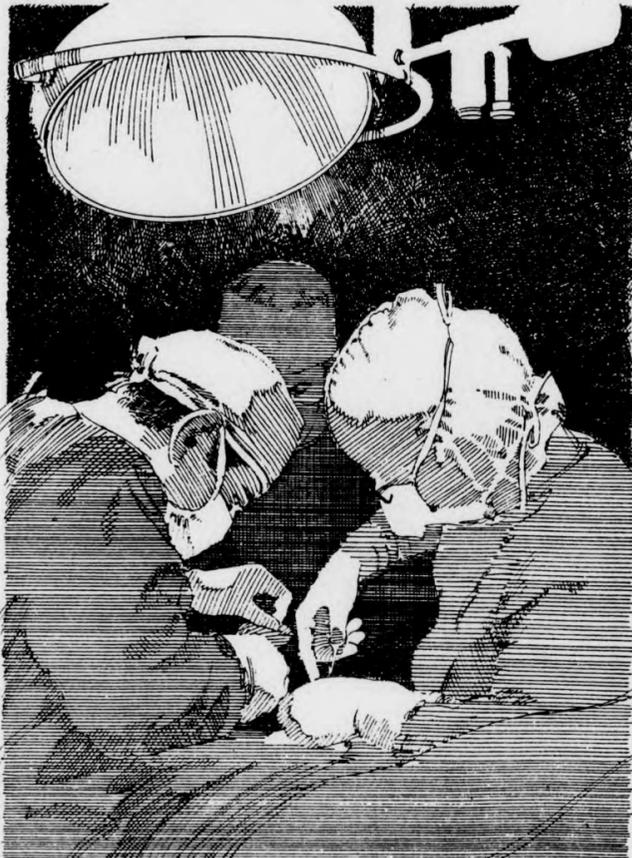
outside plans will first have to pay the Blue Cross fee and then apply for a refund. Refund applications will be available from the federation's office.

This year's fee will increase 15 per cent from last year, resulting

in a charge of around \$60, said Taylor.

This is in line with general increases in health care costs, said the federation's insurance broker, Brad Taleski.

"Drugs, health care and hospi-



Tight budget closes observatory

by Mike Adler

York scientists have a chance to save a radio observatory in Algonquin Park before it is boarded up and left to decay.

"It won't be bulldozed next week," Bryan Andrew, director of the Herzberg Institute of Astrophysics said last Thursday. "But it will have to be demolished (sometime) because you can't leave a thing like that standing in a provincial park."

Graduate students and faculty from York have spent years monitoring the movement of the earth's plates, using the largest antenna in the observatory.

The observatory has had few other visitors since 1987, when most of its funding was transferred to another, more modern, observatory in Hawaii. Since then, York scientists have campaigned to stop the observatory from shutting down altogether.

"It wasn't being closed because it had no further scientific use. It was being closed because there was no budget to afford it," said York professor Wayne Cannon.

The Institute for Space and Terrestrial Science at York would pay to keep the antenna operating for further use in tracking of continental drift and possibly space craft, Cannon said.

ISTS made an offer to the National Research Council, which now controls the site, but there has been no response, he added.

Estelle Dorais, an NRC researcher said the Council is "currently negotiating" with ISTS "so nobody knows what's going to happen."

"As long as the two parties are negotiating someone will be taking care of the observatory," Dorais added.

But Andrew said the building will be sealed and the large antenna exposed to temperatures ranging from plus to minus 40 degrees.

"My guess is that if it was left over the winter it would be rather hard to get it up and going again," he said.

The *Ottawa Citizen* reported in April that the NRC will finish closing the observatory this month and some equipment will be salvaged.

Unions at table

by Sam Putluj

Unions representing the majority of York's employees will be negotiating new contracts with the administration this summer.

On May 27, YUFA (York University Faculty Association)—representing professors and librarians—will meet with York administration to negotiate a contract to replace the previous contract which expired April 30.

YUFA chairperson Brian Abner anticipates contract talks will be long and difficult because of the complexity of the proposals.

In addition to demands for salary increases and benefits, YUFA will pursue action on other issues which its members believe are just as important, spokesperson David Cooke said.

A new formula for retirement before age 60 will be discussed. Also, professors will try to make it easier to have more flexibility in the nature of their work.

Faculty want more flexibility to focus upon their current work interest. If research is the focus of a professor's interest then he or she should be able to pursue that path and leave teaching or service work aside for the moment, Abner said.

Working conditions, time off, and hiring for new positions will also be discussed.

Representatives of the York bargaining committee were not available for comment.

Earlier this year York President Harry Arthurs went to the various faculties on a "budget tour". Arthurs explained the budget shortfalls expected for the coming year. Although YUFA does not see eye-to-eye with the university's positions on the budget, YUFA chairperson Brian Abner says he does not expect the administration to take an unreasonable position during the upcoming negotiations.

CUPE (Canadian Union of Public Employees), which represents maintenance and caretaker workers, will exchange proposals with the university by June 3. CUEW (Canadian Union of Educational Workers), which represents teaching assistants and part-time faculty, will present their proposals sometime in mid-June.

YUSA (York University Staff Association) also meets with the administration in June to begin negotiating a new contract. The current contract will expire at the end of August.

tal costs have gone up by 22 per cent across Canada," Taleski said, adding that York's 15 per cent increase will be below that level.

The following year's increase will probably be more substantial, requiring the federation to call a new referendum, Gershbain said.

Gershbain could not give an accurate figure of the expected increase for September 1992, but said it would be around \$40, putting the overall cost of the plan at around \$100.

Taleski also could not give any figures for a 1992 increase. "We have to let the program stabilize itself before we can determine anything," he said. "An increase might not even be necessary."

But he added that new figures would not be available until January or February 1992.

Taylor, however, said that the

new increase—or at least a projection of the increase—will be available sometime in June.

If a referendum is necessary, it will have to be held this fall if York is to continue having a health care plan in the year starting in September 1992.

Students at Ryerson Polytechnical Institute chose to reduce their Blue Cross coverage this year instead of paying fee increases of 83 per cent, said student union business manager John Fabrizio. Ryerson students currently pay \$78.60 for their plan, a 40 per cent increase over last year, he added.

But Taleski said the situation is different at York because of its higher student population.

Des McCann, Blue Cross' Ontario account manager said he would not comment on the issue.

More CFS on campus

by Doug Saunders

York students are going to start seeing more of the Canadian Federation of Students on campus, say student representatives.

Rob Centa and Elissa Horscroft, both vice presidents of York's student federation, travelled to Lethbridge, Alberta last week to attend the national conference of CFS, which acts as a national student government for 76 universities and colleges.

Centa and Horscroft said York will participate in several CFS campaigns next year, including a national anti-racism week starting November 21, a "week of rage" directed at the Tory government's education and social policies starting Aug. 6, and a national lesbian and gay pride day on February 14.

York's student government will also be offering a range of CFS services next year, including travel services, foreign study and work programs and health insurance.

Student Centre opening soon

by Doug Saunders

Parts of the long-awaited student centre will open "within a week or two" promises

Chia-Yi Chua, chair of the Student Centre Corporation.

Under construction since 1988, the distinctive glass-walled building was originally scheduled to open more than a year ago.

Strikes, design changes and disagreements with the university have delayed completion of the centre, which is run by students and funded by fees payed with tuition.

The cavernous 750-seat basement restaurant and nightclub will open in June, as will the main-floor food court, which features a familiar range of fast-food restaurants.

Upstairs are spaces for most of York's student governments, clubs and organizations, as well as a used bookstore and daycare facilities. These will open "6-8 weeks later," Chua said.

Opening in early July will be the York Lanes shopping mall, located right beside the student centre. The mall was built by the York administration and competes with the centre's food court, in contravention of an agreement signed between students and the university in 1988.

OMITTED

An article in April 3, *Excalibur* by Paulette Peirol (*Excalibur* Editor 1987) regarding "Media Manipulation" was reprinted from *York University Profiles* magazine. Sorry we neglected to print that credit when the article appeared.

Apology

On November 26, 1990 Excalibur published an editorial cartoon which was offensive to several individuals and to a significant segment of the York population. We removed the paper from our stands and re-issued it with the cartoon deleted and with an apology to the community. However, we did not apologize to the individuals depicted. At this time we would like to offer Andrea Shettleworth and Jean Ghomeshi our sincere apologies. We regret that this depiction appeared in our pages and we have taken steps to prevent this from occurring in the future.