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Rae's record funding blow hurts York

by Clive Thompson

Canadian University Press

TORONTO — Ontario's announcement of the smallest increases in university funding on record will mean a clampdown on enrolment and a seven per cent hike in tuition fees for 1992-93.

The government allotted the lowest increases in the province's history to universities for the next three years — one per cent for next year, two per cent for each of the next two.

Ontario will spend \$1.97 billion on universities next year, premier Bob Rae announced Jan. 21.

York President Harry Arthurs said the low funding increase will have "very serious consequences for the university system and for York."

But Arthurs said the announced transfer payments differed little from York's expectations, and that he would ask Vice President Sheldon Levy to "rework the financial models" to compensate.

Arthurs did not say whether this would result in staffing cutbacks, layoffs, wage freezes or reduced enrolment.

Across the province, first-year enrolment will be cut by up to 4,000, and up to 1,500 staff and faculty layoffs could occur, according to the Council of Ontario Universities.

Despite Rae's calls for a "profound commitment to protect our network of public services," fewer people will have access to an increasingly weaker education, said COU chair Peter George.

For students, the announcement is a "double blow" because the government's increase in funding is far lower than the increase in fees they're allowing, said Laurie Kingston, chair of the Ontario Federation of Students.

Traditionally, tuition fee hikes are on par with government funding increases.

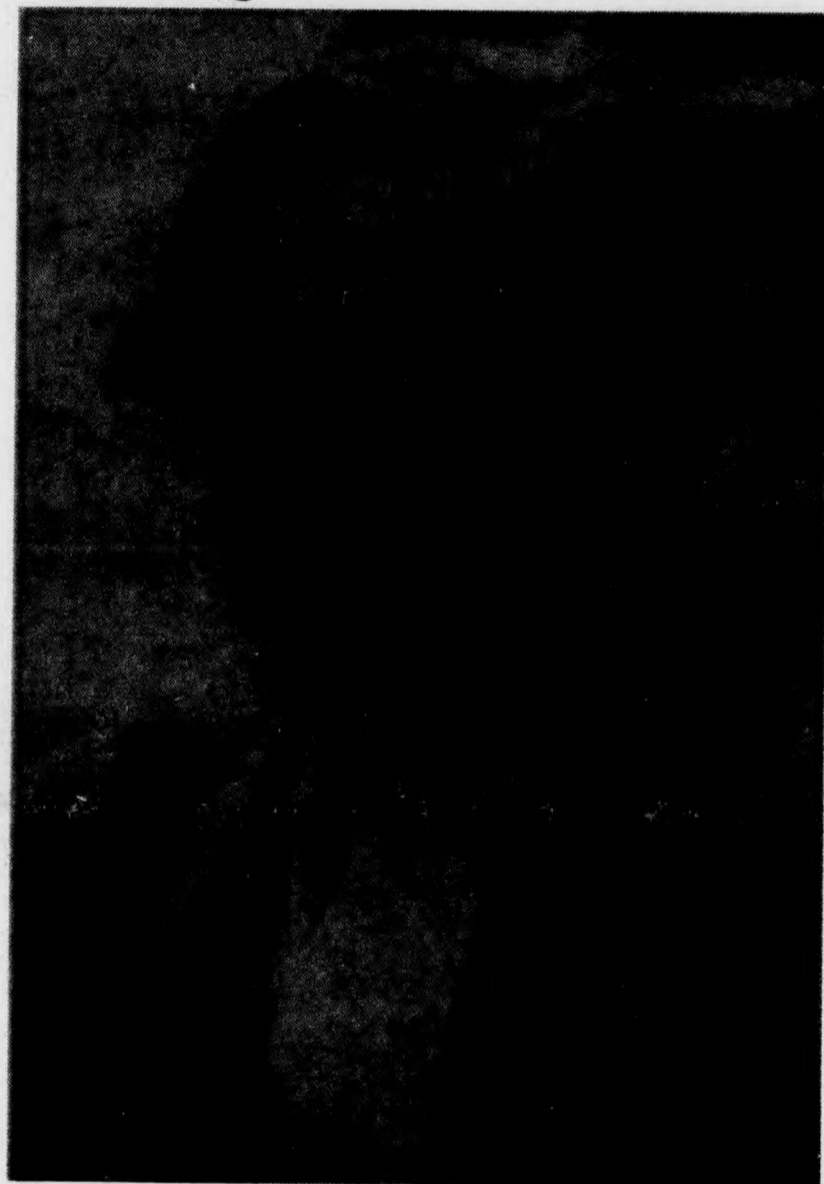
OFS members were shocked by the government's break in precedent, Kingston said.

"Generally speaking, people are freaked out. No one is going, 'well, these are hard times.'

"This isn't the time to be making it harder to get into university. They're asking us to pay more at a time when last year was the hardest on record to get a job, and it's going to be harder next summer."

Officials from the ministry of colleges and universities said the government considers a seven per cent fee increase fair, given the economic times.

"The minister feels that a college or university student contributing a dollar more per week isn't a big thing to ask, and for those that can't afford it, we can help," said ministry communications officer Shelagh Nerney.



Yes, even the premier was once a university student. Of course, he only had to pay \$500 tuition — ours will be increasing to more than \$2200 next year, thanks to Bob himself.

Ontario is increasing student aid through the Ontario Student Assistance Plan to cover rising tuition fees, she added.

The ministry refused COU's calls to let universities set their own tuition fee levels, claiming this might allow fees to rise too high for OSAP to help.

"If people are going to argue that seven per cent is a high fee increase, then what would they say to fifty per cent?" Nerney said. "It's not something that the government is considering right now."

OFS members aren't convinced the OSAP increase will be adequate, since the ministry hasn't given any figures or an outline of how it will ensure the money will go to those who need it, Kingston said.

Ontario's faculty association members are depressed but not surprised by the funding announcement, with its premonition of wage freezes and job losses.

"We were fairly well-prepared — or should I say beaten down — for this," said Bill Graham, president of the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations.

OCUFA members are glad the government supported open negotiation of wage cutbacks, rather than

pushing for mandatory settlements, Graham added.

But it's obvious that without a funding increase to match inflation, universities will inevitably push for freezes on salaries, which dominate over 80 per cent of most university budgets, he said.

In the long run, universities and government will have to restructure the entire post-secondary education system to cope with the new economic situation, as will all social service sectors, Nerney said.

Protests planned

Moments after Bob Rae announced his post-secondary austerity program, students across Ontario were planning actions to make him change his mind.

A York-based coalition held a "really great" organizing meeting Jan. 27, according to organizer Rob Centa, external vice president of the York Federation of Students. The coalition includes students, union members and faculty, and they plan to meet every Monday at 5:00.

They organized a mass forum, to be held in Vari Hall on Feb. 12 at noon. Call the YFS at 736-5239 for more information.

No more winter-summer term

by Maggie Borch and Christine F. de Leon

The Faculty of Arts voted last week to eliminate all courses in the winter/summer term starting in 1993, as a response to provincial funding cuts to post-secondary education.

According to Bob Drummond, associate dean for the Faculty of Arts, senate approval of the program suspension is imminent.

Drummond said the elimination of the winter/summer term will reduce the incoming 1992 class size and bring York's population down to a manageable number.

"It's not a happy circumstance altogether," he acknowledged.

Approximately 1200 students will be eliminated, 700 of them from the faculty of arts, according to Steven Fienberg, York's vice president of academic affairs.

"We have too many students and too little fees [from the province]," Fienberg said. "We've tried to cut back on our enrolment."

Student representatives described the move as short-sighted.

"The solution is not to cut back programs with limited resources," said

Rob Centa, external vice president for the York Federation Students. "The solution is more government transfer payments to post-secondary education."

"It's a shame because the winter/summer session allows students to work part of the year to pay for tuition," Centa argued. "Any time you remove options, you diminish accessibility."

The elimination of the term will also hurt part-time faculty. According to student Senator Justin Linden, Atkinson College alone will eliminate approximately 70 part-time teaching positions.

Representatives from the Canadian Union of Education Workers — which represents part-time faculty — were unavailable for comment.

"When the government decides post-secondary education is a priority the winter/summer session will come back," said Linden.

"In no way should this be looked on as a cancellation, it's only a suspension," he added.

The Faculty of Science and Glendon College are also expected to suspend their winter/summer terms.

Profs promote alternative plan

By Sam Putinja

History professors John Saywell and Jerry Ginsberg say York's administration and unions are incompetent in dealing with the university's impending financial crisis.

In response to the crisis, they suggest that highly-paid full-time faculty and staff take salary rollbacks to prevent possible job cuts and erosion of the teaching environment.

In a letter to *Excalibur*, Ginsberg accused the York University Faculty Association of not acknowledging the rollback option as a temporary measure.

According to Saywell, his ideas premise from collective principles. "You don't let the most vulnerable people get hammered. Those of us who are fortunate enough are not prepared to see our colleagues get the pink slip."

"Do you want to see your colleagues, most of them young, get hammered while you pick up \$90,000? It comes down to basic human values," Saywell added.

Saywell's proposal suggests that faculty earning more than \$100,000 a year would see a rollback of 5 per cent. Those earning between \$80,000 to \$99,000 would face a rollback of 3 per cent while those earning less than \$50,000 a year would receive a raise equal to the rate of inflation. Retirement would be made mandatory at age 65 with compensation for those who would be disadvantaged by this aspect.

"I believe most faculty members favour mandatory retirement in the interest of institutional rejuvenation," said Ginsberg.

According to YUFA chair Brian Abner, there is minimal support for Saywell's proposal. "There have only been a dozen positive responses out of a faculty of 1200 and no response in support of Ginsberg."

Saywell and Ginsberg further suggest that YUFA has failed to take York's financial situation into account when negotiating faculty contracts. (YUFA members received around 9 per cent in pay and benefits increases this year).

According to Saywell's letter to *Active Voice*, a YUFA newsletter, the university could save a substantial amount of money and avoid laying off faculty if YUFA agrees to modify its contracts with the administration.

Abner said YUFA already consults with the administration about York's financial situation in order to establish a framework for negotiations.

"It may be that people think nothing is happening but that is not the case," said Abner, adding that YUFA has provisions in its contracts to deal with layoffs resulting from cutbacks.

Although Abner does not see salary roll-backs as a good idea he said that YUFA is concerned about the vulnerability of part-time professors and junior faculty to budget cuts.

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