

Support centre still faces huge debt to York

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by Corey Goldman

A student-run campus counselling service continues to face a massive deficit in spite of substantial funding increases.

The Student Peer Support Centre owes the administration a long-standing debt of approximately \$15,000. Lee Mendelsohn, the Centre's coordinator, drew attention to the debt at a meeting of the York Federation of Students, which funds the Centre.

The debt consists mainly of interest accumulated over the last 7 to 10

years. Part of the costs of this debt are from long-distance phone bills dating from several years ago.

Cora Dusk, assistant vice-provost with the Office of Student Affairs, said "Phones, among other expenses, were at one time covered through grants from the CYSF [now YFS]. When the CYSF gave student governments direct control of their funds, the peer support centre no longer received funds for these services. Therefore they accumulated some debt with the administration."

Nikki Gershain, internal vice president for the YFS, said the debt is

a major concern. "The outstanding debt was probably not that much in the first place, but since it's been sitting so long, the Peer Centre can't even attack the interest."

Gershain suggested that if the university would forgive the accumulative interest on the debt, then perhaps the Centre along with the help of other organizations could tackle the principal amount owing.

This year, the YFS awarded \$10,000 to the Support Centre — almost triple what they have received in previous years.

When asked about the deficit,

Mendelsohn said she had no knowledge of what the outstanding debt was or its origins. "My position is to run the day-to-day operation of this place. Any past outstanding debts are dealt with by the board."

According to Lois Spencer, chair of the Support Centre board, the deficit will not be addressed in this year's budget. "The Peer Support Centre has yet to acknowledge this deficit," Spencer explained.

Mitch Rose, a Support Centre volunteer, said the Centre is invaluable to the York student community, offering students a place to bring their

personal concerns.

"People come to use it and gradually work out their problems. It's confidential, people can phone in and talk to us and we don't ask questions. We just listen," said Rose.

The SPSC has 22 trained volunteers available from Monday to Friday.

Dusk said she hoped people in the community would recognize the value the service SPSC offers and help out with the deficit. "I would sincerely hope that people across the community would band together to help solve the problem."

not enough vote for health care

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scription drugs. It then becomes a choice of paying for medication or for school."

Nikki Gershain, vice president of internal affairs at YFS, said it would have been pointless to hold a referendum at York with such a high quorum.

"We can't justify holding a referendum (for undergraduates) when we know it's going to fail," Gershain said.

Voter turnout for referenda and elections at York has rarely exceeded 10 per cent of the student population. The record turnout was 3,577 voters — approximately 17 per cent of full-time undergraduates — for the original health insurance vote in 1989. Debbie Glass, director of the

office of student affairs and a member of BORC, argued that the previous quorum of 2500 students (about 10 per cent) did not accurately represent the student body.

Sheldon Bergson, a Bethune college student and member of BORC, said students could be making a statement by not voting.

"If not even 20 per cent of students care to answer a referendum, their silence speaks for them."

The last time York students voted in a referendum — to decide on membership in the Ontario and Canadian Federations of Students — the YFS barely exceeded the 2500-student requirement, even after spending thousands on advertising.

Universities play big role in economy

Canadian University Press

Toronto — Ontario universities need a public relations face-lift, says an organization designed to promote post-secondary institutions.

The Alliance for Ontario Universities, a one-year-old group, released a report Nov. 4 outlining the impact of universities on their local communities.

The \$30,000 report, funded by the Council of Ontario Universities, showed that the province's universities:

- * contribute \$6.2 billion yearly to the provincial economy
- * support 138,000 jobs associated with university operations
- * pay taxes on incomes and profits to the federal and provincial governments totalling nearly \$1.25 billion annually
- * generate \$3 for every \$1 in government funding
- * contribute to the community through outreach programs, volunteer assistance to community organizations and the development of programs to en-

courage visible minorities, women and natives to attend university.

"We shouldn't be overlooked, we do make a difference," said Robert McGavin, an alliance member and chair of the University of Toronto's governing council. "Our contributions not only provide for Ontario citizens, but we pay our way."

"Higher education in the province is a major industry. More people are employed in higher education than the pulp and paper industry or the steel industry."

Ryerson president Terry Grier, another alliance member, said the report would help communities understand universities.

"If there is any lingering sense in the community that Ontario's universities are elitist or withdrawn from the world at large, we want to put that long-outdated stereotype to rest," he said.

McGavin said the report shows the economic impact of universities on their communities is significant.

"Universities have a solid and meaningful impact on the province."

But this does not mean they are in good shape, he added.

"I want to dispel the notion that things are all right," he said. "For example at U of T, we have history classes of 1,500. Some students don't come from communities that large. They are not getting the education that they deserve."

Grier agreed.

"We've done our job in the circumstances of the slowly declining infrastructure of universities," he said. "We've been so busy doing our job, we've overlooked the fact that the circumstances in which we're doing it are getting worse."

McGavin said the alliance hopes to gain public support for more government funding, particularly in light of the NDP's recent announcement that funding for colleges and universities will decline next year.

"We are competing for tax dollars," said McGavin. "We have to, in the months and years ahead, provide a case for our efforts."

MCU officials were unavailable for comment.

General Meeting to plan

THE BLACK HISTORY MONTH SPECIAL ISSUE

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PRESIDENTIAL SEARCH OPEN FORUM for STUDENTS

3:00-4:00 pm, Wednesday, November 13, 1991
The Senate Chamber, S915 Ross Bldg

The Presidential Search Committee invites interested students to provide the Committee with your view regarding York's leadership needs in the next 5 - 10 years. While your thoughts and comments are invited on all aspects of the search for a new President, we would particularly welcome your views on the following questions:

- What are the key **internal** issues, challenges, and opportunities that will be facing York in the next five years, and with which the new President will have to deal?
- What are the key **external** issues, challenges, and opportunities that will be facing York in the next five years, and with which the new President will have to deal?
- Recognizing that no one candidate will possess all of the desired qualifications to an equally strong degree, what should the Committee seek in potential candidates for President, in terms of:
 - * academic and professional qualifications
 - * administrative and management experience and abilities
 - * personal qualities and style
 - * "fit" with York University
- Based on the achievements of York University to date, what goals and aspirations do you have for the University over the next five years? What are your expectations of a President in working to achieve those goals?

John F. Bankes, Chair
Presidential Search Committee