

No student aid increase this year says Ouellette

By PETER KRAUTLE

Provincial Minister of Youth, Jean-Pierre Ouellette, has again stated that changes to the provincial student aid program cannot occur this year following a conversation with The Brunswickan, in light of the proposed student demonstration on Thursday.

Ouellette said his department had received a copy of the five demands for changes to the student aid program from the AFS and that the provincial cabinet had discussed the demands in a meeting on Wednesday morning. The result of the cabinet discussion was that they reiterated the government position on student aid in October, in which

changes to the programs couldn't be made this year. However Ouellette pointed out that the student aid budget for the upcoming fiscal year is presently being formulated and the AFS demands will definitely be considered in the formation of the budget.

When asked whether the demands of increasing the interest free period for repayment of loans and increasing the allocation of living expenses would be included in the next budget, the youth minister replied that those demands are controlled by the federal government through the Canada Student Loan Plan.

When asked to comment on Thursday's demonstration on student aid, Ouellette stated he had received a copy of the five recommendations for changes to the student aid program and had discussed these recommendations with the cabinet. However, changes to the program cannot occur this year and that these recommendations are being considered for the following fiscal year (budget is in the process of being made).

Ouellette stated that conditions such as extending interest-free

period and the financial contribution of the students are controlled and set at the federal level and he plans to present the student recommendations in these areas to federal government in the upcoming negotiations of a new federal student loan plan.

UNB Dean of Students, Barry Thompson, said he sympathizes with the AFS demands and feels the student demonstration is the only alternative left to make the government and province recognize some of the student aid problems students are presently facing.

UNB president Dr. John Anderson stated that he is in agreement with the demonstration on student aid, for it is one of the ways that forces politicians to listen to the views being expressed by the students.

The Senate and therefore the president has expressed the view that there needs to be improvement in the student aid program, although there are alternatives to some of the proposals of the AFS. Anderson agreed strongly with

the AFS demand that there should be student representatives on the student aid program. The Maritime Higher Education Commission endorsed the recommendation that there should be student representation on the advisory council on student aid.

Student aid affects students, why not involve them in the development of student aid policy, he said.

The UNB president felt the present system puts a financial burden on students who can least afford it. Increasing the amount of bursaries and decreasing the amount of loans to students who can least afford to pay would be a viable alternative to the present ratio of loans and bursaries. Last year the university published a brief, which recommended that at least 50 percent of all student aid be in the form of bursaries. However, the president expressed concern that government allocation of money to the university could decrease if student aid increases in the province and he hopes that this situation does not occur.

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