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Wierdbits

•It is a little known fact that you can train a frog to come to your call. However, if you then remove each of its limbs that frog will lose its hearing and no longer respond to your beckoning.

•It is a little known fact that if you flatten an average size pile of dog excrement you can cover an area larger than Ottawa.

•It is a little known fact that the captain of the Titanic's sir name was Estabrooks.

Federal reforms could up loans

But tuition hikes and big debts could follow

by Mary Rogal-Black
Brunswickan News

The federal government released a discussion paper on social reform last week, which could mean big changes for students.

"A number of the propositions look worrisome," said Tom Traves, Vice-President Academic. "The principles (in the discussion paper) can be applied in a way that is constructive...or could be destructive."

The document suggests that post-secondary education funds be reallocated. Federal grants to universities could be redirected to the students, in the form of increased student loans.

"What would be the debt burden to students?" asked Traves. That is the same question on the minds of students across Canada this week.

"Obviously the Student Union is very concerned," said Paul Estabrooks, SU President.

"Tuition will most likely go up quite substantially," he warned. "The student debt load is now at a point where it is very threatening and large."

The discussion paper suggests that loans could be paid back on an income-contingent basis — the more money you make after graduation, the higher your payments.

Estabrooks, a fourth-year business student, cautioned that the ability-to-pay idea may not be as good as it sounds.

"In theory it's a great idea. We'd

all love to pay back as we can...it's like a credit card pitch. Take as much as you want and pay for it later."

But Estabrooks said that if the students of today take on a major debtload, it could mean economic problems tomorrow.

"You're taking the buying power away from that sector which is the number one purchaser of durable goods," he said.

Vaughn Dickson, Chair of the Economics Department, suggested that the proposed changes could force universities to become more

competitive.

"Universities would have to attract students," he said. "Students would choose those universities which would provide the best education for their needs."

Estabrooks has some concerns about this prospect as well.

"Yeah, universities will be more competitive, but more competitive at what?"

According to him, the competition might be played out in the marketing arena instead of the classroom.

"Competition could be on the

grounds of how you sell the university," he said.

And Vaughn Dickson points out another possible drawback to universities competing for students.

"Universities will need to be more attentive to teaching. How would research survive?"

Meanwhile, Traves cautioned against making premature judgments about the proposed social reform package.

"The proposals are not fleshed out. Hopefully in the weeks ahead

—See Reforms, page 4.

Travel costs to soar by Christmas

VIA service ceases Dec. 15

by Pam Easton
and Gordon Loane
Brunswickan News

Plans by VIA Rail to cut passenger service through Fredericton Junction have upped travel costs and sent students scrambling to alter travel arrangements for the Christmas season.

Effective December 15, the line which runs from Halifax to Moncton via Saint John, Fredericton Junction and McAdam will cease to operate.

Via Rail still plans to run its passenger service from Halifax to Moncton through Moncton and the North Shore six days a week and students wishing to travel home to Halifax, Moncton or Toronto will be required to take the bus to Moncton.

Via does not plan to run its own shuttle service to Moncton, similar to a service it currently operates to Fredericton Junction. As a result, a return bus fare to Moncton will cost \$45.48.

A survey conducted by *The Brunswickan* this week indicates a return ticket booked five days in advance from Moncton to Halifax will cost \$40.66; Moncton to Mon-

treil return will be \$121.98; and Moncton to Toronto and back will be \$177.62.

Still higher prices apply during peak periods or if a ticket is not purchased in advance. A Moncton to Halifax return ticket would balloon to \$70.62 while similar tickets to Montreal and Toronto would increase to \$220.42 and \$318.86 respectively.

With the additional bus fare, a Fredericton to Halifax return ticket booked five days in advance would cost \$86.14, Fredericton to Moncton \$167.46 and Fredericton to Toronto \$223.10 when travelling through Moncton after December 15.

Currently Via Rail travel prices through Fredericton Junction are \$74.90 to Halifax, \$102.72 to Montreal and \$160.50 to Toronto when booked seven days in advance.

The extra ticket prices, a three-hour bus trip to Moncton and up to a five-hour wait for the train in Moncton has proven too much for some students.

"We've cancelled about 30 reservations with Via Rail in the last two weeks," said Tony Young, Office Manager with Travel Cuts in the Student Union Building on cam-

pus.

"Most students have chosen air travel at Christmas although it is more costly," he said.

"About 20 to 25 per cent of the students who come through our door book their travel plans with Via," Young continued.

"Those who have changed their plans don't seem too upset. Canada's rail service has declined over the years and most people have come to accept the gradual phase-outs," he said.

The cancellation of Via Rail's service through Fredericton Junction is expected to increase business at Fredericton airport. Although it is a bit early yet, extra flights for the Christmas season are expected.

A student ticket purchased through Travel Cuts will cost \$179 return from Fredericton to Halifax. A return ticket from Fredericton to Montreal would cost \$229.00, while Fredericton to Toronto and back would be \$309.00.

Bus fares purchased through Irving-owned SMT Eastern Ltd. cost \$115.56 return from Fredericton to Halifax for students. A bus trip to Montreal return would total \$158.36, while Fredericton to Toronto would cost \$224.70.

Travel Prices For Return Trips From Fredericton

	To Halifax	To Montreal	To Toronto
VIA before Dec. 15			
Seven days in advance	\$74.90	\$102.72	\$160.50
On-the-spot	\$132.68	\$184.04	\$286.76
VIA after Dec. 15 (includes bus fare to Moncton)			
*Five days in advance	\$86.14	\$167.46	\$223.10
On-the-spot	\$116.10	\$265.90	\$364.34
SMT	\$115.56	\$158.36	\$224.70
Airfare (Travel Cuts)	\$179.00	\$229.00	\$309.00

*Rates not in effect from December 15 to January 5, and Easter weekend.

Simon was in the process of having his first novel published, and one of his essays was chosen to appear in the next issue of *The Journal of Student Writing*.

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