

More comprehensive housing list to be made available

Sarah Dickie

The Brunswickan

Finding a decent apartment in Fredericton can be a difficult task for students. Historically, the residence office has had a list of all off campus apartments. This year the Student Union has taken over this list.

The Student Union plans for a website that lists all the apartments, as well as their location, conditions and much more.

Other universities such as Acadia and Saint Francis Xavier have implemented such programs. Vice President of Off-Campus Affairs for St. FX, Sue Marenick, said, "It made a definite improvement. It gave the power over the apartments back to the students." She went on to say that there is now a surplus of housing in the area for various reasons. This is their third year with the program and Marenick feels that it is a great idea that has proven itself.

Students will be able to access this website anywhere. Kate Whitfield, Vice President for the Student Union, says they hope this will help students from outside the province.

She went on to say that the hope is that this will improve off-campus living, as well as the standards of the apartments in general.

For landlords to post their apartments

on this new site, they will have to pay a fee of \$5 and up, depending on the number of apartments. An Approval Coordinator will then go over each apartment with a checklist that will be posted on the website.

The program needs a lot of work before the website will be ready. For starters, there is a need for a web designer. Whitfield said the Student Union is opening the position up for tenure. Any person who wishes to fill the position is welcome to submit a proposition. A Coordinator position will also be opening up. This position will be an all summer job, and work on commission.

Inspections will hopefully start by mid-semester in the winter term. All apartments will be reviewed on a recurring schedule.

The main worry is attracting landlords to the concept. If the apartments fail, they simply will not be placed on the list. No one will be viewed negatively, but they still have to pay for the inspection.

Whitfield hopes the program will bring more awareness to the vacancy rate in Fredericton. Last year, 149 units were built in the city. However, she questions how any were actually available to students. Some buildings will allow only a few student tenants or none at all.

GSA referendum debate

Chris Wilson-Smith

The Brunswickan

On September 17th, the Graduate Student Association of the University of New Brunswick (GSA) held a special meeting in order to debate a question which will also be asked in an upcoming referendum.

The referendum will ask the question, "Should the GSA withdraw from the GSAC," and will be instrumental in determining the way graduate students spend their \$2 membership fees. The referendum, which will be voted on over email, begins on the 27th of September and ends on September 28th.

The Graduate Students Association of Canada (GSAC), one of only a few national associations that represents graduate students in Parliament, has a current membership of eight to ten schools. Recently, the association has experienced difficulty as a result of the defection of some members to competing organizations.

Presenting for the "yes" side at the meeting was GSA VP External Jose Rodriguez. Rodriguez, long associated with UNB, made what he described as a "very simple argument."

According to Rodriguez, graduate students at UNB "should have (the) ability to choose a federal organization among different options."

Secondly, federal organizations "should have equal opportunity to offer their services to Graduate Students at UNB."

Rodriguez concluded his presentation saying that he believes in "equal opportunity."

Representing the "no" side of the referendum was the President and Chair of the GSA, Alain Murphy. Murphy, who recently attended a GSAC meeting in Edmonton, is a strong proponent of the GSA staying with GSAC.

"GSAC is attractive because of its focus on grad students and their issues. Its success is largely determined by the active participation of its members," says Murphy.

Updates of the debate were given on September 18th, at the regular GSA meeting.

Also on the agenda at the GSA regular meeting was discussion concerning a grad house. The location would be 676 Windsor Street, and would be founded under a two-phase development plan, architectural and business. The proposed club will provide services to both faculty and staff; however, the former has made no commitment of support. The GSA plans to host an open house, and then expand the project if the faculty shows interest.

The regular meeting also covered discussion surrounding the 2002 Conference on Student Research. The proposed dates are just before spring break, making it easier for more students to attend.

Dr. Gwen Davies, Dean of the School of Graduate Studies, would like to see more involvement from third and fourth year Honours students.

The next council meeting has been scheduled for the same date next year.

U of T President deflects criticism over Healy

Jeremy Nelson

The Varsity

(CUP) — A group of prominent international academics that snubbed the University of Toronto over its handling of the David Healy affair is way off base, the university's president says.

Twenty-seven scholars, two of them Nobel Prize winners, recently wrote U of T president Robert Birgeneau to express their anger at the university-affiliated Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) for yanking a prestigious job offer to Healy.

The CAMH recruited Healy, a noted Wales scholar, to head a new mood disorders unit. Days after he delivered a Toronto lecture last November that was critical of conflicts-of-interest between the pharmaceutical industry and medical professionals, the CAMH yanked the offer.

For almost a year now, the U of T has endured widespread criticism for its handling of the affair. The international scholars wrote that the university's actions are "an affront to the standards of free speech and academic freedom."

Birgeneau, however, has continued to deflect the criticism. He says the CAMH ultimately holds the cards over who it hires.

"Clearly, questions surrounding the suitability of Dr. Healy for the clinical leadership position are exclusively the responsibility of the CAMH," he said.

The CAMH maintains Healy's academic credentials were not the issue in its decision to pull the job offer. Rather, the CAMH says Healy was not medically suitable to treat patients. The hospital concludes the matter is not about academic freedom but simply about patient care.

Buoyed by the letter from the international academics, the

organization that represents university professors across Canada says the matter is the most important academic freedom case in the last half-century.

"Universities can't function when this happens," said James Turk, the executive director of the Canadian Association of University Teachers. Turk says the CAMH is clearly fearful of losing drug-company funding and is shying away from someone so critical of the industry.

Healy's lecture was particularly critical of Prozac, which he claims is normally beneficial but could actually increase suicidal tendencies in a small but significant number of patients. The CAMH has received more than \$1-million from Eli Lilly, the maker of Prozac.

"If there isn't the freedom to raise those concerns in a medical environment; if you find a drug that may in fact harm people and you feel constraint not to publish that, you're in fact undermining scientific inquiry and public safety," said Turk. "You undercut the whole purpose of the university."

Birgeneau insists the matter has nothing to do with academic freedom. In a written response to the international academics he wrote: "The U of T in general, and I in particular, strongly affirm the principles of free speech and academic freedom to which you refer."

"I do not believe that those standards have been compromised by the U of T in this unfortunate affair that is, at the heart, much more complicated than is portrayed in your letter."

David Naylor, the dean of medicine, had even harsher words for the letter's authors, stating their criticism could have been better directed.

"In America we have millions who

don't even have access to mental health care because of their insurance system," Naylor said. "One wonders at the energy being put into this particular issue as contrasted with the potential impact of a letter like that if it were sent to authorities in the U.S. saying it is a scandal if millions of American can't access mental health services."

But while the lines have formed, it is difficult to tell where U of T professors fall in the matter. Four hundred Canadian professors have added their names to the protest letter started by the international academics. Less than a dozen of those signatories teach at U of T.

For the CAMH and the university, that's arguably a sign there is little concern in the matter.

For the CAUT, it means something quite different.

"I spent many years at U of T and I don't know one department or faculty where there is consensus, so the fact that not one person is comfortable voicing concern about this egregious violation of academic freedom is a sign of the chill that's in place," Turk said.

Turk says a chill continues to follow the 1997 Olivieri case. Nancy Olivieri was fired after breaching a confidentiality agreement when she discovered a drug she was researching was possibly dangerous. Although she was eventually reinstated after a long fight, Turk says Olivieri and those who supported her endured such a battle that others are scared to speak up.

The university has agreed to look into its appointment processes.

"We do take very seriously the membership of our clinical colleagues in the University of Toronto professorate and the provost and the dean of medicine are taking steps to improve the rigour of the processes for joint clinical appointments with affiliated hospitals," Birgeneau said.

Alexander Zivojinovic

The Varsity

(CUP) — Carmen Russo looks into the camera, unbuttons her blouse, and reports on the morning rise of the Dow Jones. Her bra falls to the floor while she details the latest market trends and, momentarily pausing near the end of the news segment, she steps out of her last piece of lingerie. It's her job and she loves it.

"I give just the bare facts," says Russo, the business anchorwoman on The Naked News, the sassy, Toronto-based webcast news program rocketing in popularity (www.nakednews.com).

"There's nothing wrong with being candid about what we do," adds Russo, who, along with the rest of the all-Canadian crew, strips down to her birthday suit to deliver the daily news.

"We're making the news more interesting, more exciting, more appealing to viewers," she says. "Mainstream news can be so boring and predictable."

Created by Canadians Fernando Pereira and Kirby Staysn in 1999, The Naked News has grown to be an underground phenomenon, partly thanks to its cult-like following of students.

"They are our people. They always have been," Russo whispers seductively, adding that the early success of their website was driven by word-of-mouth and email campaigns on campuses.

Students particularly find the saucy blend of nudity and news refreshing, a burlesque play on the seriousness of news anchors and their marketed sex appeal. Some students also find the website an exciting supplement to their media theory classes. Surely Marshall McLuhan would have been intrigued.

Only recently though has the underground phenomenon been breaking into the mainstream. In fact, the website reportedly recorded more than six million hits this past month - more than CBC.ca. And with the female anchors recently appearing in

Playboy, The Naked News seems to have consolidated its success.

"We're not porn stars," Russo stresses. "We don't sell sex and news - we don't strip and touch our bodies in sexually provocative ways. We just simply take off our clothes while giving the news."

Perhaps this is why the news program is so charming: keeping composed and professional while delivering the news, the anchors act as if they're unaware of undressing themselves. It's mockingly funny watching a news anchor's underwear drop to the floor while reporting the latest U.S. missile-defence development, all the while looking into the camera with a professional, straight face.

Besides international events, business news and sports segments (all of which are the domain of female anchors) there is also coverage of science and technology issues, entertainment news, and notably the weather forecast - a segment always in need of some sunshine.

Due to the popularity of the website, two female anchors have been added along with the fan-fared debut of two male ones. The male addition was done in response to enthusiastic female requests, most of which were made by fans already supportive of the female webshows.

On-location reporting and interviews are also scheduled for the future as part of their long-term plan to eventually broadcast on cable TV. There have already been rumours that CityTV would be interested in such a deal.

Although this looks like a sign that the mainstream has fully accepted The Naked News, some are still not amused by the nudity.

Critics charge the Toronto-based

webshow with "journalistic prostitution," claiming it's a cheap attempt to make news more appealing. They say, despite its antics, it places more emphasis on presentation than content, leaving viewers with a skewed version of the truth.

"Why is the truth not the truth simply because we're naked?" rebuts Russo. She points to them obtaining their news from the same Canadian newswire sources that the CBC, CTV, TVA, and virtually all newspapers in Canada rely upon.

In fact, being an underground, fringe player may allow them the freedom to edit and spin the "truth" differently than what is found in the mainstream, contributing towards a healthy, diverse variety of viewpoints available to be sampled. The site probably will not be attracting Noam Chomsky anytime soon, given that the difference in information provided by Naked news compared to mainstream journalism is only slight.

But behind all this media-theory pondering lies the real reason why Russo gets up early in the morning to do the show. "I really stand for the philosophy behind the naked news - I feel like I'm an artist making a statement," says Russo, who cites her recent year living in Spain and France as an inspiration for auditioning for the show back in 1999.

Russo's philosophy is to present its main audience of North Americans with a sensibility and honesty towards the naked human body, an image more closely related to pornography in the North American mindset. The glimpse of one's beaver or moose in our country gives an allusion to a romp in the hay and perhaps makes us shier with nudity than our European cousins.

While The Naked News is only beginning to consider cable television here in Canada, an unrelated Russian television news show called The Naked Truth has been doing their show on cable for the past two years and reportedly has people such as military generals lining up to be interviewed.

According to Russo, liberal European attitudes towards nudity are a reflection of their more liberated and honest worldview.

"There's a tradition in those countries of loving the human body," says Russo, who worked as a model and an assistant photographer while in Europe. "There's an honesty in nakedness that's refreshing and liberating."

Before she left for her solo Spanish adventure, 42-year-old Russo said she was becoming increasingly unhappy. As a saleswoman of dentist supplies, she felt herself unfulfilled and being shunted into a dead-end job. Now she couldn't be happier with her new found occupation. She advises women who are in such a situation and fantasize about doing something more adventurous to just go for it.

"I'm not looking for fame - in fact, I'm still shy, as I have been for my entire life," says Russo, who disavows knowing that her stage name is the same as an Italian celebrity porn-star.

But with the booming audience of the webshow, augmented by hype from CNN.com as well as the Naturist Journal, Russo acknowledges that fame may eventually intrude on her shy character. She says it hopefully won't affect her delivery of the news as long as she continues picturing everyone that's watching her as being naked too.

Half-pipe dreams

A place to skate

Joel McCracken

The Brunswickan

New skateboard enthusiasts in Fredericton may be wondering where they can practise their sport.

During the summer, the most popular place is the outdoor skating facility in

Southwood Park. There are many rails and curbs that surround the main features of the park, which include a quarter pipe, and a 16-foot-wide half pipe. In terms of height, the half-pipe is split into two levels: four and six feet. Designed by the Department

of Civil Engineering at UNB, it is extremely sturdy, with very few structural problems. Unfortunately, some skaters do not like the height difference, which may make some tricks difficult to perform.

Grinding and sliding is limited to eight footers, which should be an ample length. For some, grinding on 6 footers is scary enough. Also, a spine ramp, which is located beside the half-pipe, is a cool ride. Except for a few kinks, it rides pretty well.

Although the park is not perfect, it is still a great place to relieve some of the jumbled thoughts you may have collected after a day at school. A good slam into concrete will always set you straight.

To get to the park, follow the Forest Hill Road until you reach an Anglican Church, then turn right. It is at the end of the street, and impossible to miss.

If you are willing to risk the elements, downtown Fredericton has a few choice spots. For example, the Playhouse parking lot located between King and Queen has long been used as a makeshift park. More often than not, you can find a box or rail set up, as well as some well-waxed curbs.

If you are hunting for equipment or apparel, there are a few shops in town that should be able to help you out. Located at 520 Queen St., East Side Board Supply is a popular stop for many skaters. Inside, there is a 16-ft 4wide indoor ramp, which is accessible if you rent or bring a helmet.

Now that you know where to go to skate, there is only one thing left to say: grind until the cows come home!



Kevin Forneris/The Brunswickan

Joel demonstrates how to catch some air off the spine ramp