

Parent company Chapters owes money Distributors refuse to ship to McGill's privatized bookstore

Jon Bricker

The McGill Daily

MONTREAL (CUP) – The strained relationships between Chapters Inc. and several of its distributors are once again stopping books from reaching the shelves of McGill University's privately-run bookstore.

Several students and professors learned this week that some distributors are refusing to ship a handful of winter semester texts to the bookstore because they say Chapters owes them money.

Chapters Campus Bookstores, an arm of the Canadian book retailing giant Chapters Inc., has managed McGill's bookstore since 1997.

Senate bookstore committee chair Kerry McSweeney confirmed last week that some titles are not yet available to students because of Chapters' financial problems. "There have been some credit-hold problems in connection with some second term courses," McSweeney said Thursday. "This credit-hold situation has definitely had a negative impact on stocks for the winter semester."

McGill administrators are "monitoring the situation closely" he said, and bookstore management has made sure that credit problems are

"rapidly being dealt with."

Late last week, however, it was obvious that some of Chapters' outstanding debts had still not been settled. Political science professor Alan Patten learned that lesson when bookstore management told him they would be unable to get a text for his Foundations of Contemporary Political Theory course. "The suggestion was that it was due to financial difficulties," said Patten.

Hackett Publishing, the distributor for the text, later confirmed it was not filling orders to McGill's bookstore because of outstanding debts.

"My experience with the McGill bookstore has been generally positive," said Patten, "but I'd hope that either Chapters would sort out its problems or that there would be some sort of change in management of the McGill bookstore."

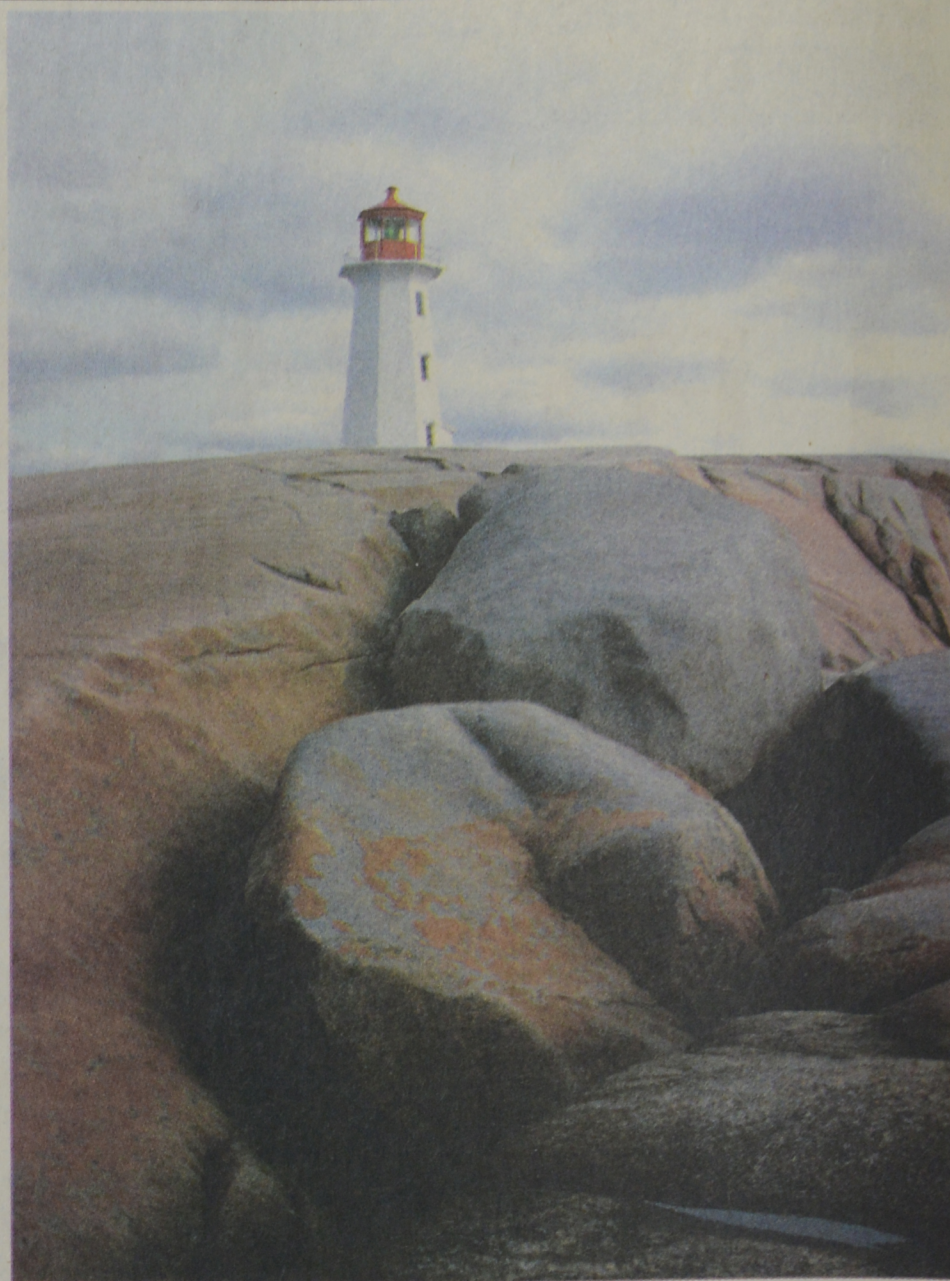
The bookstore's acting manager, Mario Fortino, would not confirm which publishers had put the bookstore on credit-hold but said he is confident the overwhelming majority of course texts have arrived. "There are probably less than a handful of publishers that we're negotiating with [and] these problems are being dealt with as quickly as we hear about them," he said.

Fortino also said most of the books that haven't arrived are late for reasons beyond the bookstore management's control. He blamed late requisitions from professors and a number of books which are out of print. "There are so many [other reasons], you wouldn't believe it," he said, "but we're working through any problems that are presented to us."

Professors like Patten have begun to order their books at a number of other stores across Montreal. McSweeney said that while he had no numbers to indicate whether more books are being ordered at other stores, he wouldn't be surprised to learn this was the case. "If that is a trend, I think we all know why," he said.

McSweeney said he is concerned McGill's bookstore is particularly vulnerable because there is a real need to get books on time for the start of each semester. "It was clear in this case that some publishers were using McGill's predicament to earn leverage with Chapters Inc."

Last summer, a number of publishers decided to stop shipping to McGill's bookstore. However, bookstore management smoothed things over in time for the fall semester and even had a particularly high in-stock rate.



Kevin Forneris / The Brunswickan

Peggy's Cove is remarkably picturesque given a kickass photographer.

Tentative deal in York strike

Reka Szekely

The Excalibur

Striking graduate and teaching assistants reached a tentative agreement with York University's administration early Tuesday morning after a bitter 11-week struggle.

"It's more or less exactly what we were asking for right from the beginning," says Mark Hiller, chief steward for the teaching assistants, one of the three units of Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 3903. "By judging the mood today, people feel a real sense of victory and it was well worth our energies."

The deal was struck after a forced ratification vote last Friday which only saw one of three bargaining units, the contract faculty, agree to the university's proposal.

The vote was called by the Ontario Ministry of Labour in December and was strongly opposed by the union executive. When both the teaching assistants and graduate assistants rejected the offer, the two sides went back to the table for a marathon bargaining session. They reached an agreement at 7:00 am on Tuesday.

The two-year agreement includes the much-coveted tuition protection for both teaching and graduate assistants. It also establishes a first contract for graduate assistants, including a base pay of \$5,880 for the first year, plus an

\$882 signing bonus and \$7,300 in the second year. The university initially offered a base of \$4,500 in October. All units will receive a two per cent pay raise.

The major issue of contention during the strike was the inclusion of tuition protection for teaching assistants and graduate students, meaning any tuition increases will be met with a dollar-for-dollar rebate. This prevents the university from negating salary raises with tuition hikes.

Though no one from the university was available for comment, in a prepared statement, President Lorna Marsden said "There are no winners except undergraduates. This is their day and it's taken far too long. We are a university with a spirit of tolerance, respect and the patient pursuit of knowledge, and we must immediately return to normal academic life," said Marsden.

Many York students worry about the lost time. "I'm relieved, but I'm still angry about the whole thing," says Emily Falls, a first-year music major. "I'm feeling pretty stressed out now because of all the stuff we're going to have to catch up on now."

The university's senate executive announced today that the term will resume on Friday and will continue until February 12th. Students will write fall exams from February 13th to the 23rd. The winter term will begin on February 26th and go until May 11th.

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place
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hours
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last day
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