

New Brunswick's innovation initiative

by Greg Leblanc

For the third consecutive year, the New Brunswick Innovation Foundation (NBIF) will be supporting graduating students by funding their innovative entrepreneurship ideas.

Open to both university and community college students throughout the province, the purpose of the Student Entrepreneurship Prize (SEP) is to provide funding, mentoring and networking

for graduating students aspiring to start their own businesses.

"The 2006 Student Entrepreneurship Prize is intended to provide an opportunity for young people in New Brunswick to become successful entrepreneurs," commented Warren McKenzie, NBIF Chairman.

"The SEP has been, and continues to create new innovation within corporate environments and has definitely exceeded our expectations in many ways," added Barrie Black, NBIF President and CEO.

NBIF was set up by Premier Lord to support innovative business ideas in the province. As part of the \$25 million start-up fund, \$70,000 is given out each year for the SEP, divided evenly between university and college students. Three top prizes of \$20,000, \$10,000 and \$5,000 are awarded. This money will be a start-up fund for successful applicants to get their business ideas off the drawing board and into the market.

"To name a few of the companies that came out of the previous

SEP contests: InversaSystems Inc.; DecisionMED Inc.; Legacy Lane Fiber Mill Inc.; and Modern HiEnviro Tech Inc.," noted Black.

Beyond the success of the businesses that NBIF has helped get off the ground, the SEP itself has been getting consistently better applicants each year. Students from a wide range of backgrounds and focuses are vying for funding, with many interesting ideas coming forth.

There are a number of criteria that applicants use for guidelines

in creating their proposals.

Judges this year will be looking at proposals from 2006 graduates whose business plan focuses on developing and marketing innovative products, services or technologies. The quality of the business plan, its commercial feasibility, budgeting, and the business/management skills of the applicant will all be taken into consideration.

As McKenzie pointed out, passion will also be important: "you should believe in what it is you can do."

Even for those who don't win a prize, valuable feedback and advice will be provided by judges to help these aspiring entrepreneurs succeed in a competitive market.

Though the deadline for submissions is not until March 2, 2006, students should start thinking about their ideas now.

For more information on NBIF or the Student Entrepreneurship Prize, please contact the Foundation by email: student.prize@nbif.ca or check out their website at www.nbif.ca.

No proportional representation

Liberal Shawn Graham hesitant to change electoral process

by William Wolfe-Wylie
Atlantic Bureau Chief

According to Shawn Graham, there are still some problems with the current models of proportional representation. Graham, a contender for the New Brunswick Premiership, at a classroom presentation at Mount Allison University last Wednesday.

With a bi-election on-going in Saint John, Graham said that the one thing he did not want to do was confuse the electorate with a new system. Making several selections on a single ballot, as would happen in one model of proportional representation, could cause some voters to believe that their votes are worth even less than they were before, he said.

"What's healthy is that we're having debate on [the issue]," said Graham to a class of approximately twenty students.

Graham admitted that there are flaws in the current democratic system, but does not believe that the flaws in the alternatives have been explored thoroughly enough to consider making the transition. He said that the debate is over how to translate the number of votes for a political party into the number of seats in the House.

According to Graham, there are some problems with direct proportional representation because of the current system in which different seats represent different geographic areas. He said that if

a region voted overwhelmingly in favour of one political party, proportional representation could have a candidate from a different party take that seat in the House. This could lead to further alienation of the electorate if voters are unsure of who is representing their interests in the legislature.

Graham also emphasized the need to add value to New Brunswick's forest industries and to balance the ecological and industrial needs of the industry.

"It counts for 11 per cent of our GDP and supports one out of seven families," he said. "Our forests are like the oilfields of Alberta."

Graham was criticized at the meeting for not paying enough attention to more immediate problems and focusing more on long-term goals. Issues such as accessibility to post-secondary education and other social issues are more what people are going to be thinking about when they go to the polls, said one student.

According to Graham, however, the goal of the government is long-term sustainability of funds. He said that a one-time payment to post-secondary institutions was of little use in the long term, but that an investment in the woodlands meant an overall increase in revenue for the province, which could then be transferred to post-secondary institutions more regularly.

One student in Graham's audience supported the idea, noting that often the issues which need to be dealt with more immediately are issues that were not dealt with in a long-term fashion twenty years ago.

New Brunswick will next go to the polls to elect a premier in 2007.

Bombay Sapphire: a glass with class

by Amanda Brown

It all began with a woman named Mary.

Mary Pickford, a silent movie star, was given a beautiful blue 60 karat sapphire by her husband; it was known as the star of Bombay.

Pickford later bequeathed the Sri Lanka jewel to the Smithsonian Institute. This is where Bombay Sapphire, a name that encompasses art, film, and jewels, originated. The bottle of Bombay Sapphire, the gin, shares the same blue shade as the gem.

Bombay Sapphire is an elegant brand with an intriguing bottle. The London dry gin strives to showcase its creativity, elegance and intrigue, as well as its genuine support of its design initiatives.

The Canadian Bombay Sapphire Design Competition will soon celebrate its fifth anniversary; since its inception, entries have grown exponentially. The second running of the competition saw 30 entrants; 150 to 200 applications are expected this year. This growth rate is attributed to program awareness. Participants

apply nationwide but the greatest number of entrants hail from British Columbia - the location of the Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design - and from the University of Alberta. Applicants from the East coast have not been strong, but the design competition anticipates a change in this trend.

At present, winning glasses are neither mass-produced nor used in media advertisement, though it may be a step that the competition may take in the future. Glasses that have been featured in media have been from designers who were at one point unknown. Because Bombay Sapphire chose to feature their work, these designers have subsequently become established. Eight years ago, an unknown designer named Karim Rashid designed a Bombay Sapphire martini glass. After receiving a commission to create a glass to be featured in the gin's print advertising, his designs have become known around the world. He is currently a judge for the Bombay Competition and the originator of the internship prize element.

Dolly Audit won the Canadian

Bombay Sapphire Glass Competition in March 2005 and went on to compete in Milan at the global competition. Rashid was so impressed with her portfolio and glass design that he offered her an internship as part of her Canadian prize. Audit begins her internship in January 2006. She is employed at IBM and is a graduate of Carleton University, but will move to New York in January to work with Rashid. Whether or not she is able to retain a full-time position has yet to be seen. This is the first time an internship position has been included in the competition prize. Last year Rashid, on impulse, offered Audit the position as a prize element of the competition.

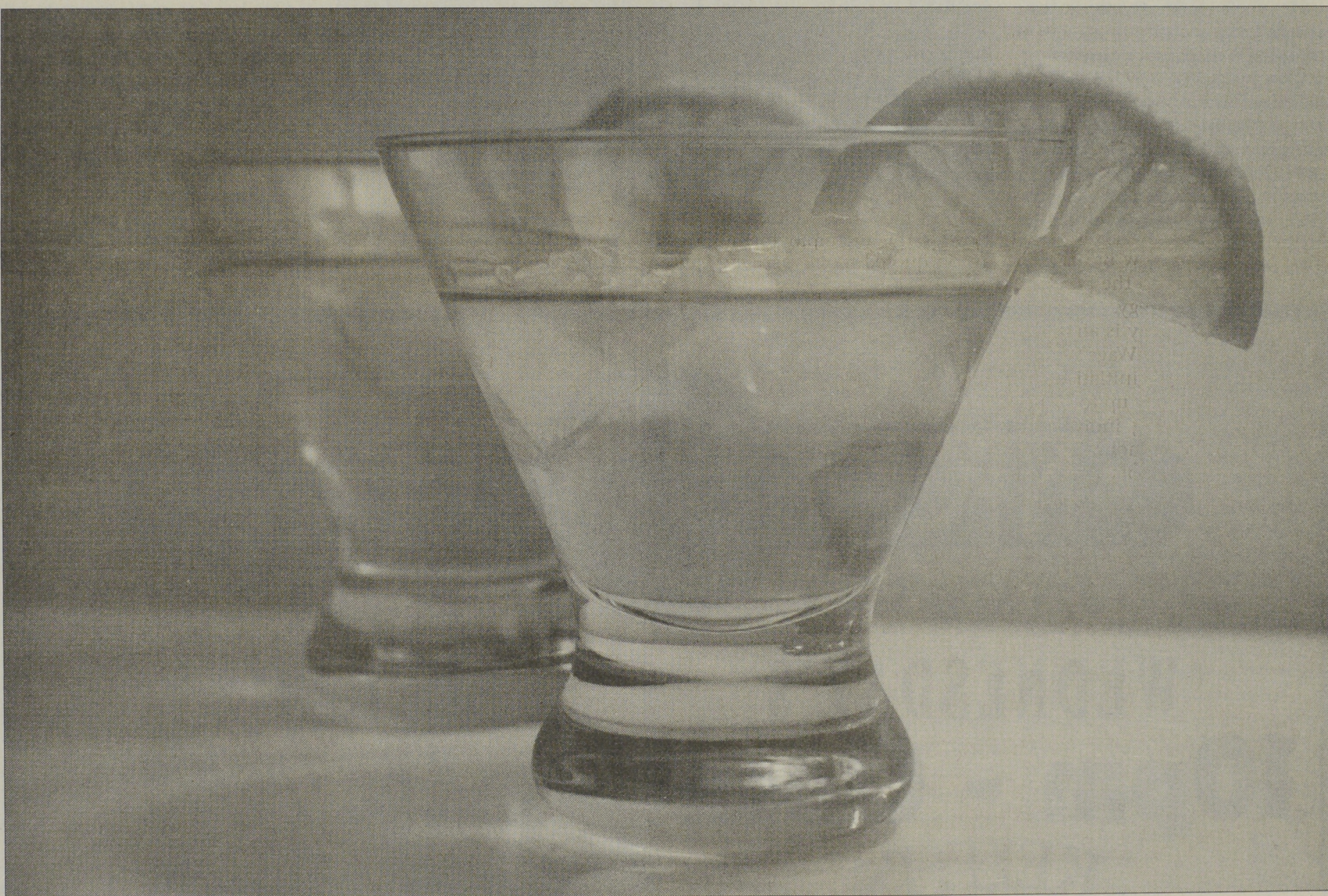
"This new addition is our way of always growing and reviving the competition and trying to help emerging designers," says Sara Deek, Branch Manager for Bombay Sapphire. The new internship element will allow applicants to be exposed to the established design community. Bombay Sapphire's objective to assist emerging designers is showcased in this endeavor, which creates a

platform for budding artists. Deek explains that designers and artists are very supportive of this because at one point they were emerging designers themselves.

"When you are up and starting in the world it can be tough sometimes. This is a great networking opportunity for emerging designers." The gin company's genuine interest in design spurred this initiative that creates more awareness about design within the general community.

In efforts to further competition accessibility, a bilingual website (www.bombaysapphire.ca) has been created to provide information and online entry forms. By having the website and contest details in French, the company hopes Quebec entries will rise.

Glass is a niche medium, but is not a dying art; it is currently experiencing an evolution with designers incorporating glass and different mediums to form an entire work. Audit's winning design employed both glass and stainless steel. From Sri Lanka to silent pictures to innovative design, Bombay Sapphire holds the glass. Bottoms up!



Michèle Legendre/The Brunswickan

Bombay Sapphire gin is currently holding its fifth annual glass design competition. In addition to a cash reward, the winner this year will receive a design internship in order to establish themselves in the industry.

The Brunswickan is back online!
(well, sort of...)

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