

Commission recommends UNB Saint John for closure

from UNBSJ page 1

solve NBCC's need for space, but the polytechnic school could then take advantage of the skilled teachers from both campuses.

Several months ago, Andrew Oland, President of Mooshead Quebec made the recommendation for the merger of UNBSJ and NBCC-SJ. He stated that the combined school could focus on the energy and healthcare education, both of which are emerging job markets in the city and province.

UNB Student Union VP External Jordan Graham says that losing UNBSJ would be incredibly detrimental to UNB as a whole.

By losing the campus, he says, "we lose every single competitive strength we have."

Graham says that the UNB Saint John campus helps UNB reach its critical mass as a 'national university,' which requires a certain quota of students, professors and research. Without that accreditation, he says, UNB would lose the competitive edge it has along with schools like McGill and the University of Toronto.

"What students need to know is that this is not a Saint John issue," says Graham. "We can't work as UNB Fredericton and UNB Saint John. We need to work as [a unified] UNB to maintain the level of quality."

Graham agrees with other areas of the report, however, including needs-based financial aid, increased bursaries and grants, and student loan capping.

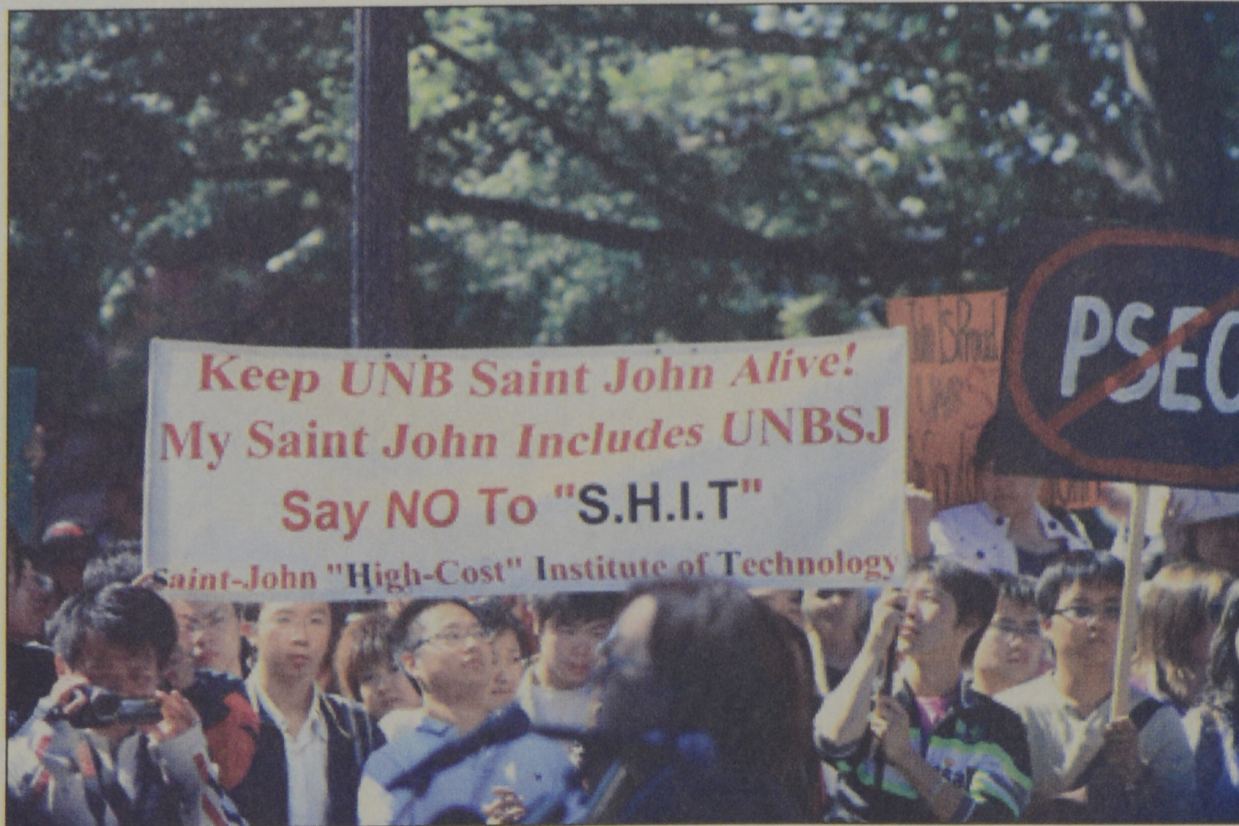
UNBSU President Brad Mullins is also happy with some discussions in the report, and says that certain recommendations in the financial aid section were reported nearly word-for-word from discussions he was involved in with the commission.

He also says that the recommended conversion of the UNBSJ campus to a polytechnic institute and away from UNB is important to all UNB students.

"It is a UNB problem," says Mullins. "We can't separate issues and concerns."

In the past, Mullins says, things have been divided, but that this issue will have a direct impact on both campuses.

"I do have concerns that it will jeopardize our status as a national university. It's short term benefits over long term costs," says Mullins. "If we lose [UNBSJ] students, do we get the same funding?"



Jennifer McKenzie / The Brunswickian

Coverage from UNBSJ

by Vanessa MacKinnon
The Baron, UNB Saint John
Special to The Brunswickian

SAINT JOHN - Starting the year off with a bang has never been so easy as a recently reported news leak from the Commission on Post-Secondary Education in New Brunswick has stirred up quite a commotion amongst faculty, staff and the Greater Saint John community. Speculations of the contents of this report have been, up until now, mainly whispered rumors. This changed for the English-speaking communities when it was reported in last Thursday's edition of the Telegraph Journal, as it first appeared in the French media l'Acadie Nouvelle.

To start, students should know that the provincial government, led by Premier Shawn Graham, announced in the Throne Speech, on February 6, 2007 the establishment of a private commission on post-secondary education. The purpose of this commission is to gather relevant information analyzing the entire New Brunswick post-secondary educational system. From there, they are to create a report which will "assess the economic

and fiscal challenges facing New Brunswick and recommend steps necessary for the province to achieve self-sufficiency by 2026." In order to do so, the commission traveled to nine locations around New Brunswick. Meetings lasted a combined total of twelve days, two of which dealt with Saint John: April 30 and May 1. Meetings were held at the Delta Brunswick Hotel. These meetings were open to the public and saw a total of five proposals. Presenters were asked to respond to a discussion paper released in March which gave ten questions to be answered by presenters to the commission. Attendance of these sessions was poor and students were underrepresented.

The project is run by two commissioners: Dr. Rick Miner, President of Seneca College and former Vice-President of UNB from 1993 to 2001, and Dr. Jacques L'Écuyer, the founding chairman of the Commission d'évaluation de l'enseignement collégial du Québec. These men are aided by a small advisory panel of eight individuals: Isabelle LeBlanc (Enterprise Greater Moncton), Anne Marie Levi (Mawiw Council/Mi'kmaq-Maliseet Institute), Denis Losier (Assumption Life), Jean-Yves Ouellette (Polyvalente Cité-de-jeunes-A-M-Sormany), Léo-Paul Pinet (Centre de bénévolat de la Péninsule Acadienne

(CBPA Inc.), Gerry Pond (Marine Partners Inc.), Andrew Steeves (ADI Ltd.), and Elizabeth Weir (Efficiency NB).

The first presentation from Andrew Oland, the chair of the Saint John True Growth Post-Secondary Education Task Force, was a proposal commissioned to Amulet Consulting and Growth Strategies Inc. It is called Enriching our future: a strategic plan for post-secondary education, research and development, and technology commercialization and can be found in .pdf format when googled. Oland's proposal called for the government to "recognize that post-secondary is not a community development tool but an economic engine that must be market driven." He proposed that the Saint John campus of UNB separate from Fredericton and merge with the New Brunswick Community College (NBCC) and Saint John College in order to create a "singular knowledge and technology institute... [that would] focus on Energy/Advanced Manufacturing and Health Sciences." Liberal Arts, Business and General Science programs would be removed.

Patrick D. Darrah of the Saint John Construction Associate Inc. and Malcolm M. Somerville gave the next presentation which argued changes similar to Oland. Darrah and Somerville's proposal was premised on their belief that "the relationship with UNB Fredericton must change," and "uniting the campuses of NBCC and UNBSJ offers outstanding opportunities." They also advocated for the autonomy of this new organization from the government.

Thirdly, Cheryl Robertson, former Principal of the NBCC Saint John, recommended a choice of four possible routes the Commission might take in order to boost NBCC. Some suggestions included allowing all colleges to separate from their government department and seek self-governance. They would install a board of governors, reduce satellite colleges "from eleven to five" and reinstate sabbaticals for educators. Other options mentioned by Robertson were adopting a regional model, the 'Maine Community College System'. She too indicated the possibility of uniting UNBSJ and NBCCSJ.

Dr. Debra Lindsay, associate professor at UNB Saint John, had a submission which recommended UNBSJ have a separate budget from UNBF, that the government develop a new funding formula to resolve the inequality between the campuses, and that more transparency in fiscal matters be enforced. This proposal was endorsed by 22 professors

on this campus. This and all other proposals are available on the Commission website.

Michael Bradley wrote a piece which praised New Brunswick post-secondary institutions but blamed government budget cuts for causing financial burden. Bradley discussed the inequity between satellite campuses and main branches. He also noted that in regards to provincial contributions to the Saint John campus, "almost 0% [is allotted] to the Arts faculty." The Commission ended its tour on May 2, 2007 and was expected to release the report of its recommendations on September 18, 2007.

Due to public demand, this agenda is scheduled to change, bumping the release date of the official report to Friday, September 14, 2007 after concern was raised from a statement made by Jacques L'Écuyer, Commissioner, reported in the August 28 issue of l'Acadie Nouvelle. The Commissioner mentioned that "the Commission is also thinking of suggesting that the Saint John campus of the University of New Brunswick fly with its own wings." The report indicates that the commission is favoring an alternate model of post-secondary education from the existing university and college institutions. L'Écuyer went on to support polytechnic establishments which, he claims, "are institutions that offer more applied programmes, more linked to the needs of the community. They are less focused on advanced or very theoretical research... We think there is the possibility to do something in this vein."

Although it is not clear whether L'Écuyer will seek to adopt Oland or Darrah's model, or perhaps some compromise between the two, it is clear from the current reaction that this decision will cause some unrest amongst Saint John residents. The President of UNB, Dr. John McLaughlin, has gone on record to say that the university does "not endorse a merger of UNB Saint John with NBCC Saint John." In an interview, the External Vice-President of the Student Representative Council supported Dr. McLaughlin's statement. Both parties have urged students to contact their local MLAs and MPs for more information.

Representatives from NBCC refused to comment and the Office of the Premier has stated that they will make no comment until the official commission report is released.

(Editor's Note: This was written on Tuesday, September 11, 2007, several days before the Commission on Post-Secondary Education's Report was released.)



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