

SUB to get new focal point



UNBSU President Bethany Vail stands outside of what was once Travel Cuts at the main entrance of the SUB. The space is being converted to a new Welcome Centre for the Student Union.

CAMERON MITCHELL
THE BRUNSWICKAN

Last month, Travel Cuts moved out of its space in the Student Union Building, and opened up some prime real estate. Situated just in front of the main doors, the space is visible by almost everyone who enters the SUB. So who ended up grabbing this prime piece of SUB real estate? None other than the Student Union themselves.

In a little while, the Student Union will have the space converted into a Welcome Centre for UNB students and visitors.

"Along with it being the point of contact for all students and visitors when they come into the SUB, it's also going to be kind of like a branch of our Student Union offices," explained Student Union president Bethany Vail.

The lease has just been signed for the Welcome Centre, which will open

some time this month.

The Student Union's two full time staff members will have their offices moved up to the Welcome Centre. This will make the Student Union more easily accessible and more visible.

"Right now when you walk into the SUB it's not very welcoming," said Bethany Vail. "When students come in and they have questions, they don't really know where to go. Students in the past don't really know where the Student Union is, or how to find the Student Union."

Students will be able to find answers for questions about the health and dental plan, yearbook inquiries, and questions about the city of Fredericton. There will also be a Student Helping Tree, information pamphlets on the Student Union, and much more.

"This is a great step forward for the Student Union because it's not only increasing visibility of the Student Union and allowing the students to reach out and find us, but it's also creating accessibility," said the SU president.

"Currently the Student Union offices are not wheelchair accessible, which is kind of embarrassing," said Vail. The new location will give students with disabilities access to the Student Union. With the SU offices in their current location, students in wheelchairs are forced to deal with the problem of SU staff needing to come up to the hall to talk to them. This situation is far from ideal.

"What is fantastic about this is that we are going to be able to be wheelchair accessible, accessible to those students with disabilities, and I think it's a fantastic move for the Student Union," said Vail.

The new Welcome Centre has also furthered some other changes in the SUB. The Paper Trail will be moved into the Welcome Centre in January. The photocopying and scanning services of the Paper Trail will be offered in the Welcome Centre, and the Centre will also sell tickets for concerts and events.

However, because of a deal that is ending with Canada Post, the SUB will no longer have a place to send packages after this term. Everything

else that the Paper Trail does will remain, and it will all be transferred over into the Welcome Centre in the winter semester.

So when will this new Welcome Centre open? "Well right now we're going through the motions of getting the Welcome Centre painted and getting everything finalized," the president explained. "But it will be open this semester. Probably some time in November," she said.

The cost of opening up the Welcome Centre will be minimal. The University is going to pay for the painting, and the general transformation from the old Travel Cuts building into the Welcome Centre. The Student Union is going to move some of their computers and equipment up into the new space, so that will also help to minimize costs.

The Welcome Centre will give the students a place to go with their questions, and it will bring the SU up from the burrows of the SUB and out into the open. The Student Union, says Vail, will be more visible and it will be better able to foster relations with the students.

NB loses an independent news source

CAMERON MITCHELL
THE BRUNSWICKAN

The Carleton FreePress, after less than a year in business, has ended publication. The small independent newspaper was published out of Woodstock, New Brunswick as an independent voice for Carleton County, and serve an alternative to the Woodstock Bugle-Observer.

The Bugle-Observer is owned by Irving's Brunswick News Inc, which owns all of the province's English-language dailies and most of its weeklies.

On Monday, Oct. 27, the FreePress printed its final issue.

"We have tried everything," said FreePress founder and publisher Ken Langdon in a recent press release. "Our staff has been heroic, right down to the last person. We've got a good paper. We've earned a place in the fabric of Carleton County, but in the end we simply cannot compete with Irving's financial power."

"For most of our short lifetime we have been beating very long odds," wrote FreePress editor Bob Rupert in one of his final editorials.

Earlier this year, the Canadian Association of Journalists awarded the FreePress its prestigious Presidents' Award for its "dedication to serving their community with an independent eye."

The FreePress was put in a bad situation when the Bugle-Observer announced that it was cutting its ad prices in half

for the next year and its per issue price for customers from \$1.25 to 25 cents. Last week, it offered a yearlong special buy at 29 per cent of its regular ad rate.

"Brunswick News can afford to drop a few million dollars here to get the Bugle-Observer's monopoly back and the Irving chain's manager is willing to do what it takes here to discourage any others who might take heart from our success to compete in other New Brunswick markets," said Langdon.

The general manager of weekly newspapers for Brunswick News, Kelly Madden, disagrees with Langdon's assessment. In a press release issued Monday, Madden stated that the Bugle-Observer's ad rates actually increased by 4.5 per cent over the last year.

"The Carleton Free Press failed to note that they were first offering free newspapers when the Bugle Observer responded with a 25 cent newspaper offering. What The Carleton FreePress failed to disclose was that the Bugle Observer's 25 cent newspaper offering was valid for 4 weeks only between September 12 and October 5th – a much shorter duration than the free newspaper offering by the Carleton FreePress," Madden said.

As when any publication shuts down, it is the readers who suffer. The FreePress was a fresh voice in New Brunswick that brought something different to the table.

"We feel badly for our readers, we feel badly for our advertisers and we feel badly for a community that really needs an honest paper with the courage to publish all of the news – even if it hurts," said Rupert.

In the end, the little paper that could, couldn't.

STU paper down \$2000

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newsroom funding would need to be approved by a two-thirds majority vote of the student representative council.

Council met on Thursday, Oct. 30, where in a secret ballot, the 13 voting members voted 9-3 against a motion to honour the agreement with the Aquinian. One member abstained from voting.

Debate lasted close to three hours, the majority of which did not pertain to the actual agreement which was to be honoured. Pertinent questions – such as the validity of the written agreement and the authority of Gallant promising nearly \$3,000 before his presidential mandate began on May 1 – were largely ignored.

Discourse focused more so on issues such as ways around honouring the agreement, the Aquinian's budgetary decisions, and the public availability of its constitution and budget.

Gallant remained quiet during the three hours of discussion, speaking only to make the initial motion and to remind members of meeting policy.

After making the motion at the start of the meeting, though, Gallant did note of the April 25 executive meeting that "at that time there was a consensus to approve it based on conditions in the proposal itself, as well as other proposals were met."

Members of the executive expressed different views at council. Both VP Student Life Mark Henick and VP Administration Corben McLean were vocal about finding alternatives to the donation of the money.

A loan from the SU was suggested as an alternative, but both Fox and Aquinian Editor-in-Chief Bailey White stated that they were not comfortable with such a proposal at the time. Both editors stated that a loan would result in burdening the existing or future editorial board of the Aquinian.

Nearing the two-hour mark of the meeting, debate continued over issues unrelated to the initial contract. Some persons in attendance questioned the discussions.

"It's not our money we're playing with," SU General Manager Tina Reissner said. "We're playing with students' money. Essentially, the students are shareholders and we should focus on that."

Fox explained that he was more concerned about the fundamental

argument.

"Under the terms of the contract, what could be done?" he said.

No one on council directly answered the question, though Henick reiterated the loan, which Fox said was not the stipulation in the initial contract.

The funding for the newsroom was originally intended to come from the STU SU's surplus from the previous academic year.

SU General Manager Tina Reissner said at council that the Union's accountant warned them in May not to spend their surplus, but Fox said that no one alerted any Aquinian staff member of this until after they made purchases in August to enhance their newsroom.

"If this doesn't get approved," said Fox at council, "then the actions of the Union are directly hurting students and the paper. If we weren't guaranteed this, we wouldn't have spent this money."

No official minutes were taken at the executive meeting in April when the decision of the grant was reportedly made. According to STU SU bylaws, these meetings are considered confidential. At times when the STU students' representative council is unable to meet, such as during the summertime, governing power falls upon the executive council.

\$ 100,000

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