



Something similar to these bins will be part of the installation of the recycling depot.

Green: working for the students

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plastic bags.

Once proposed, the City of Fredericton took on feasibility testing and costs related to it to test the political waters of investing in a city service for the campus. The final proposition was presented to the University-Community Relations Committee several weeks ago, and now all that is left is to get through paperwork.

The cost of the project is to be divided five ways, among the City, and the student unions and administrations of both UNB and STU. The City of Fredericton has offered to pay for any ongoing pickup and maintenance, as it does for its existing depots in the city.

"All of the maintenance will be put forward by the City. The City is stepping up and helping out students on this one," says Graham.

All parties are on board for the project, he says, with the exception of the STU administration, which has yet to voice its support.

The UNB Student Union initially intended to fund the whole project itself, says Graham, at a cost of about \$18,000. Now split five ways, the one-time estimated cost for each group will be approximately \$3,800.

"We currently have an environmental trust fund we established this year," says Graham, "and the purpose of that is to

look forward to eco-friendly initiatives, to help the greenness on campus for students who want to participate. This is the type of initiative we've been waiting to invest in."

Graham does not have an estimated timeline of the installation of the depot, as the implementation process is out of his hands.

"The City and Physical Plant have to enter negotiations as to how it will be installed, and when the best time period would be," he says. "Probably after class ends to avoid high-density traffic. The allocation of space will have to be looked after by Physical Plant in collaboration with the Engineering Department from the City."

The likely spot will be in the SUB parking lot, which could raise an issue with students concerned with parking space. However, Graham says that is only one spot, and potential locations continue to be examined. One possible location, he says, could be behind the NRC building.

City Councillor Tony Whalen, who co-chairs the University-Community Relations Committee with VP Academic Shirley Cleave, says the depot provides a welcome convenience for students.

"I think it's beneficial because it gives students on campus an opportunity to participate in recycling. It's sort of a continuation of our existing program; we have three depots around the city,

and it was a matter of allotting funds to add more bins or depots around the city," explains Whalen.

"One of the things we looked at last year was giving students on campus the opportunity to recycle. We thought it was important to be accessible to students. We're working with both UNB and St. Thomas to jointly fund the capital cost on the depot, and then the City would be responsible for the operation and maintenance of those depots in the future."

The location of the depot still needs to be determined.

"It has to be somewhere that is accessible for the truck to load and unload the depots themselves. We have to work with UNB to find a suitable location," says Whalen. "We're looking at having something in place towards the end of the year. That's several months to get the equipment and putting it in place."

Jordan Graham calls the initiative an example of the Student Union working with the people necessary to get student issues looked after.

"I think this is really reflective of the union's ability to negotiate and the ability to present students' legitimate concerns with the different bodies that we need to work with," says Graham. It's simply a matter of hearing students out and taking it to the powers who make the decisions to solve the problems we face."

Slippery: making it hard to get around

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ing something to make it safer for us," said DeMerchant.

It is not only the general walkways and paths on campus that have been neglected; DeMerchant also said the SUB parking lot is nearly pure ice.

"I always hear motorists saying they don't know what to do when driving their cars in campus parking lots."

Shirley Cleave is the chair of the accessibility committee at UNB; she has been working with her committee to form a new online survey to help address campus accessibility issues that students have had.

The committee receives a lot of complaints and suggestions from students, which is the reason they have formulated the survey to help improve and eliminate these problems.

Students have been sent information on the survey in their Student E-News letters and can access the survey and share their thoughts at www.unb.ca/survey. The survey is anonymous and is centered on receiving feedback and learning how to improve overall accessibility on campus.

As for the conditions outdoors, "the weather has caused these conditions to be somewhat out of our control; winter is a large challenge to us," said Cleave. "We are making efforts to improve what we can."

This is not the sole intent of the accessibility committee: it targets objectives that improve accessibility in general on campus.

Many of the buildings on campus are being renovated specifically to accommodate students with disabilities. There is a new elevator being installed for the Student Services building in Jones House; MacLaggan Hall is being renovated, and the Marshall d'Avary Hall theatre is also being refurbished, Cleave said.

The accessibility committee is trying to improve not only physical access but other barriers that stand in the way of learning as well. They do this by providing alternatives for students who are hard of hearing and those who have

trouble writing exams.

For Cleave, the biggest accomplishments this year are based on improvements that will be beneficial in the long run.

"The elevator in Carleton Hall is a huge asset, and this is the first time we have ever done a survey for the students," said Cleave.

The winter still proves harsh for students to get from point A to point B, however.

Third year civil engineering student, Lauren Scammell feels there is more that could be done to ensure safer walkways.

"Overall, they do a good job. It is better than Fredericton as a whole, but it still needs definite improvement, like more salt," said Scammell.

One area around campus that seems to be giving students the most difficulty is Windsor Street.

"The worst place to walk on campus is at the corner of Windsor Street and Beaverbrook," said Scammell. "The hill is always icy and it is never cleared or salted."

The walking conditions are bad enough for students who are not in

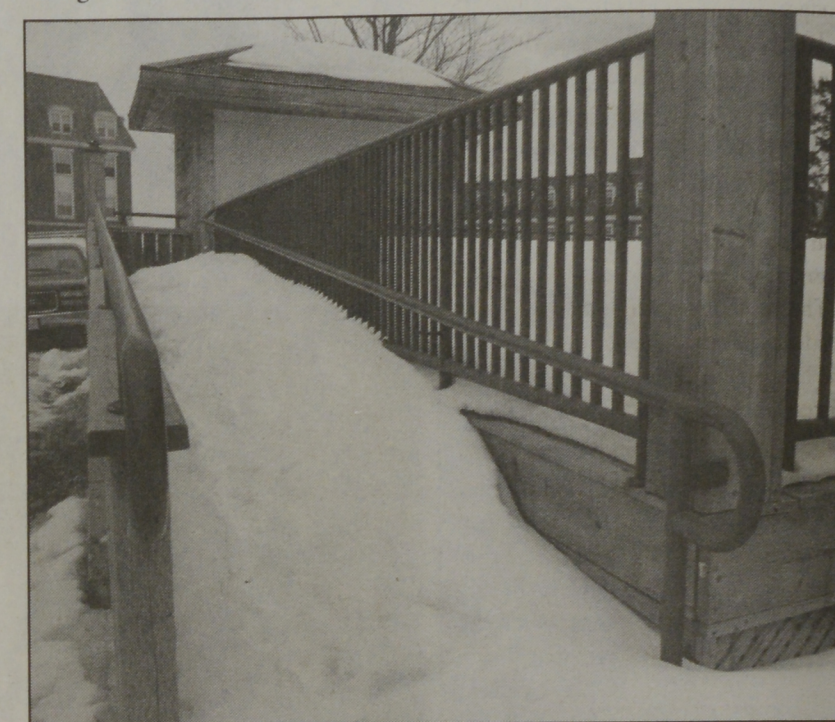
wheelchairs, but what about those with disabilities?

"I don't know of any areas that would be cleared right now to make them wheelchair accessible," said Scammell.

Despite the fact that the winter storms have made campus difficult to access, the accessibility committee has been working to improve wheelchair access. Including the new elevators and ramps, there are also a number of disabled parking spots located on campus. Cleave said that the focus is about listening to the concerns and keying in on the areas that need the most attention.

The online survey being conducted will be beneficial for the future, said Cleave, as the results from it will be used to make significant changes on campus. The main thing the committee is asking for is student input.

Cleave said the important thing to remember is that anyone can easily become the person who needs access. Already, she has seen several students walking around on crutches, and one can only assume that it might be somewhat related to the poor, icy conditions.



Andrew Meade / The Brunswickian

Winter storms have made getting around campus difficult for students and faculty alike.



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Canada student loans can be "a financial penalty"

Reform expected to ease students' burden

by Ksenia Prints
CUP Central Bureau Chief

WINNIPEG (CUP) -- Many students are forced to reduce their course loads to get involved with their university, to earn money to pay for their education or for medical reasons. But when they do, Canada Student Loans is often the largest barrier they face.

Students who switch to part-time status or drop out altogether quickly lose their eligibility to be a part of the national loan program, and immediately start accruing interest on their loans. Payments are then expected within six months.

When David Jacks was elected President of the University of Winnipeg Students' Association, he still had another year left in his degree. The union's bylaws mandated that he drop most of his classes while he held the office.

As soon as that happened, Jacks lost his student loan and began accumulating interest on what he had previously borrowed.

"[For] students who want to get involved on campus, it's sacrificing a year of your academic life... and I certainly felt a financial penalty," said Jacks.

"I will lose one year of my studies, and if I want to continue my studies, then the money I've made through this position is going directly to the student loan."

CSLP has an interest relief line, which allows students to stop making payments on their loan, but to be eligible, a student's family income is assessed and must fit the criteria established by CSLP.

Karen, whose last name is protected for employment reasons, dropped out of school in 2006 after she was diag-

nosed with breast cancer.

She was denied interest relief based on her and her husband's projected income. She was making \$1,400 a month through private insurance, which she said did not even cover living expenses and medicine.

"Financially, we were in the shit. That \$1,400 was all I had to live on."

Jacks, who took time off for a paid position, was also ineligible.

"I can't start a new line of credit [with Canada Student Loans]," he said. "It is difficult to get the national and provincial bodies to recognize student activism and the student unions."

The scenario is no longer rare. 10-40 people drop out of the University of Winnipeg every month, said Colin Russell, the director of academic advising in the faculties of arts and science.

Financial difficulty is one of the most common reasons for the move, he said.

"A fair number of students will cite the money that they have isn't sustainable and they have to work more," Russell said.

"Some students will make the decision to continue with courses and maintain funding, even if it's not to their benefit academically," he added.

"They might have a lower GPA that's not indicative of their ability, or if they had more money, or time."

Applying for interest relief or an additional loan upon returning to school doesn't always work, either. Students are required to submit proof of enrolment in post-secondary studies, and to not have defaulted on any previous payments.

Many students have complained that paperwork gets lost, or the process takes too long and students are forced to find other ways to pay for their tuition while their files are being processed.

Karen's medical forms were lost three times, she said.

After extensive complaints, the federal government placed the entire CSLP under review during 2007

and, in the 2008 budget, earmarked \$123M to Canada Student Loans Program reform.

Over half the funds, \$74M, are dedicated to improving the program's responsiveness to borrowers' economic circumstances.

"There's not enough support when you phone student loans," said Karen. "It's not a service oriented, humanistic culture."

"We've heard complaints from students about this scenario," said Julian Benedict, co-founder of the Coalition for Student Loan Fairness.

The CSLP recently filed an Access to Information Request to CSLP to find out how many people are charged interest while still in school. They are currently awaiting results.

Many students are unaware of this complication until they go into collection, said Benedict.

While CSLP's original borrowing conditions state what happens if students change to part-time status, these documents are a confusing collection of rules and exceptions.

"The rules are more of a challenge than they need to be for students," said Benedict.

Hope is now high that the new government funding will be used to make CSLP more approachable and flexible. \$23M has been earmarked for an online service overhaul.

Benedict also suggested creating a national student loan ombudsman, a neutral third party to assist people with specific concerns. At the very least, he said, problems should be assigned to an individual who can handle the case.

Benedict also believes that part-time loans should be interest-free, and the interest-free grace period reinstated.

Interest relief should also not be decided based on projected income, said Karen, but case-by-case.

Overall, Benedict doubts that \$123M will fix the CSLP.

The final allocation will be brought to a vote in the House of Commons in the middle of March.

Monte Solberg, the minister responsible for CSLP, could not comment beyond the budget's projection.