

ON CAMPUS

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ALGONQUIN SA president Adam Gal says student response to a planned fee hike has been "generally positive."



Jason Ransom SUN

Algonquin sports fee hike

Many students unaware of proposed activity-fee increase

By BRENT REANEY
Ottawa Sun

ALGONQUIN College students could be paying 50% more in activity fees per semester come next fall but students feel they've been left in the dark about the planned increase.

The \$30-per-semester increase in student activity fees, planned for August 2004, will help finance debt repayment on a planned \$2.8-million athletics field, locking the college's students into a 12-year payment plan.

"I didn't know it was for sure," said Kristin Mould, class rep for Algonquin's dental assistant program. "I don't think we even got an e-mail regarding it."

According to Students Association president Adam Gal, the announcement of the proposed capital expansion project came Nov. 20 at an open student forum attended by about 100 students.

Days later, the fee increase to fund the project was then voted on by the SA board of directors. The fee, which still must be passed by the college's board of

governors, is now out of the students' hands in terms of input.

Aside from Mould, a class rep who attended the student forum, only one out of 14 students who went on the record with the Sun even knew a motion to increase student fees was proposed by the SA, let alone passed.

"I didn't know and I could probably tell you that a lot of other people I know didn't know about it either," said early childhood education student Vicki Mears.

'Look at future'

But SA general manager Jack Doyle says he's been hearing for years from students who want to have an athletics facility built.

And many students support the idea of a new athletics field.

"Don't look at the money. Look

at the future. It's good for the school and the city," said Girde Ali, a second-year photonics engineering student.

Algonquin's student activity fee of \$80 per semester ranks as one of the lowest in the province, according to Doyle, and hasn't been increased in over 20 years.

The low fees are what caught the attention of Algonquin president Robert Gillett.

"He (Gillett) said, 'let's work through this and see if we can possibly get fees for things,' and what we said to him is that there has to be value for those fees," said Gal of talks initiated by Gillett in September.

"Ultimately the student pays. I don't want to be disrespectful but that's the only source of money we have," said Gillett.

Algonquin students don't seem upset about the planned fee increase or the field itself, but some aren't happy about the lack of communication by the SA.

"I wasn't informed. I don't even know who our class rep is. Anything to do with my fee, I would like to be consulted," said Corbett Sherring, a second-year photo-

tics engineering student.

Gal estimates the SA talked to over 800 of the college's 13,000 full-time students but could not provide documentation. He describes the student response as "generally positive."

Carleton referendum

But a similar project, also involving a substantial student fee increase, was proposed by the Carleton University administration in March of this year and voted down in a student referendum.

"There's no way we could just increase the fees without a referendum," said Kimberley Bryce, president of the Carleton University Students' Association.

According to Gal, the SA board of directors didn't consider the expense of holding a referendum necessary and thought the board had a "pretty good sense that this is where we want to go."

But Bryce is surprised the SA went straight to the students for the required funds. "I would try to find other ways to generate revenue before I ever thought of increasing the students' association levy."

Thieves grab laptop, camera

When Canadian Association of Journalists' executive director John Dickins went to flip on his laptop two weeks ago, it wasn't there. The association's Algonquin office was broken into on

Campus Flashes



Dec. 3 and Dickins' personal laptop and the organization's digital camera were stolen.

Dickins says the stolen goods are valued at \$1,500. "I cancelled the office insurance because I figured we were in a secure facility and we wouldn't need it," said Dickins. Algonquin security services declined comment on the situation.

Staff urged to ratify deal

Support staff at Ontario colleges are being urged to ratify a proposed collective agreement. A strike vote scheduled for Dec. 10 was cancelled after a Dec. 2 session of bargaining produced the tentative agreement: "We wanted to get a deal, we didn't want to go on strike," said Rod Bemister, vice-chairman of the support staff's OPSEU bargaining team. The proposed agreement includes a 6.62% pay raise over the course of two years and expires Aug. 31, 2005. The ratification vote will be held tomorrow.

Stars come out at auction

After their computerized saw broke down for the first time in eight years, a group of Algonquin furniture technician students were forced to cut the majority of 189 wooden stars by hand. The Children's Wish Foundation then sent the stars to Dalton McGuinty, Ryan Malcolm, Patrick Lalime and a host of other celebrities who decorated them last week. "We were able to do it with about 12 students, but we had offers from 30 to 35," said program co-ordinator George Rothschild. The stars will be sold in a silent auction held at Carlingwood mall until Dec. 21.

New auditorium in works

The Algonquin College Students' Association is in the process of developing plans to construct a \$3.8-million, 600-seat auditorium. If approved by the college's board of governors, the project is expected to be completed before the end of 2006. Students would be charged a dedicated building fee of between \$22 and \$27 per semester once the project is completed.

— Brent Reaney

On Campus, the Sun's weekly look at post-secondary events and issues in Ottawa, appears Wednesdays through the school year