

# Campus residences not covered under tenant act

By **KELLY PEDRO**

TORONTO (CUP) -- Students living in residences at Ontario's colleges and universities should be protected under the province's tenancy legislation, student activists say.

Presently, Ontario's Tenant Protection Act does not cover students living in undergraduate campus residences, leaving them with no formal protection of their housing rights.

While most universities have their own tenancy policies in place, critics say the fact students aren't covered by provincial legislation leaves them in a vulnerable position.

"Tenancy depends on student status and there's quite a gap there because [universities and colleges] can pretty much do what they want," said Debra Ram, director of the community and legal aid services program at Osgoode Law School.

Although graduate apartments fall under the Tenant Protection Act, undergraduate residences are excluded because they lack self-contained bathroom and kitchen facilities. This leaves Ontario universities with complete discretion over undergraduate residences.

For example, the provincial legislation requires landlords to give tenants 30 days notice before an eviction. Ontario universities, on the other hand, are not required to give students living in undergraduate residences any notice.

"It gives universities and colleges too much power and sets up an unfair situation," said Joel Harden, chairman of the Ontario component of the Canadian Federation of Students. Harden believes a single set of rules governing students is needed to ensure they are treated fairly.

Student advocates also

say they're worried by the fact that since universities aren't bound by the Tenant Protection Act, they can charge whatever they think the market will bear.

But not all students see the lack of formal guidelines as problematic.

Kevin Baker, a resident tutor at York University, says government legislation isn't necessarily the best way to protect students' rights.

"The university is pre-occupied with its reputation, so it works to protect students in some respects," he said.

Yet Baker concedes that students could be easily victimized if they found them-

selves in a negative scenario while living in a university residence.

York University says that even though student tenants aren't covered under the provincial legislation, the school follows its guidelines anyway. "We operate as if we were completely under the act," said Norm Noddle, manager of York's apartments. "I feel we're bound to operate under those guidelines, and that's what we've done."

But Noddle admits the guidelines are not enforceable. "Believe it or not, we don't have to do anything," he said.

It's not clear why dorm-style housing isn't subject to

Ontario's Tenant Protection Act.

According to Kevin Sullivan, manager of existing housing policy for the Ministry of Housing, student groups didn't lobby to have undergraduate residences covered by the legislation when the province revised it in 1997.

But Harden says the Canadian Federation of Students submitted proposals to the Progressive Conservative government asking that residences be included in the act.

The lobby group also submitted a research paper showing how hard students were hit by rent increases, he says. "Basically it was ig-

nored," said Harden. Students living in Ontario residences aren't the only ones with no formal housing protection.

Students living in undergraduate residence apartments in Alberta, Newfoundland and British Columbia also lack formal protection under their province's tenancy legislation.

Despite the fact they're not covered by provincial tenancy law however, these students still have options.

Even though they can't lodge complaints with the provincial housing tribunal, students living in undergraduate residences can still turn to small claims court if they have problems, Ram says.

## Acadia looking into Newfoundland campus

By **AMANDA LABONTE**

GRAND FALLS-WINDSOR, Nfld. (CUP) -- Acadia University could open a campus in central Newfoundland as early as next September, says the mayor of Grand Falls-Windsor.

The Central Newfoundland Education Committee recently approved funding for Acadia University to study the feasibility of a university education centre here.

The study will investigate impediments to the university centre's success, including the availability of suitable sites, affordable high-speed network links and major operational costs.

Grand Falls-Windsor Mayor Walwyn Blackmore says the university and town are moving into the planning phase of the project.

"We are confident right now that the ball is rolling and that our original intention was to have some presence here in

September '99 and right now I don't see any reason to change that date," he said.

Blackmore says the town has been trying to expand its university presence even though Memorial University offers distance education courses and a transfer program with the College of the North Atlantic.

Last summer, Blackmore said the town had been fighting for a university presence since the provincial government shut down six regional first-year campuses in 1996, including the one in Grand Falls-Windsor.

"We had a lot of discussion with Memorial and Memorial didn't seem to have very much interest," said Blackmore. "So then we approached Acadia University. Ever since the early part of this year we've had meetings and correspondence with them."

Blackmore says the proposed campus would initially

focus on first-year courses but other courses could be phased in at a later time.

Acadia would offer more than just distance education courses, but also classrooms, offices and on-site instructors.

In a prepared statement, Acadia described the possible campus as a "technology-rich, world-class university education centre."

Nancy Van Wagoner, director of Acadia's division of continuing and distance education, says the project could have implications for more than just Grand Falls-Windsor and Acadia.

"The project has the potential to provide information that will benefit all Canadian universities as they face the challenges of extending their resources far beyond the walls of their campuses," she said in a prepared statement.

For now, Blackmore says the town is considering asking private companies to

help fund the project because the former minister of education indicated the province would be unable to help fund the campus.

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