

## U of T considers helping Toronto's homeless

By CARLA TONELLI

TORONTO (CUP) -- The University of Toronto should consider and implement strategies for assisting the city's homeless, particularly in the coming cold months, one of the university's top governing boards says.

A motion urging the university to look into the matter was passed last Tuesday by the University Affairs Board in a move that was applauded by campus activists, who have been calling on the university to respond to Toronto's homeless crisis.

"We have a whole range of expertise we can bring to this complicated issue," said Margaret Hancock, warden of U of T's Hart House.

"People who are needing shelters these days are in worse shape than before. It's not just a matter of providing a roof over their heads and a cup

of coffee anymore," she added.

Hancock pointed to a proposed long-term assistance plan that will address health, social, and funding issues alongside the more immediate band aid solutions of shelter.

"It's a good first step," said Holly Baines, vice-president of the school's Graduate Students' Union. "It's a really simple undertaking."

The fact the vote was passed unanimously indicates the immediacy of the crisis in the city, says Chris Ramsaroop, president of U of T's Students' Administrative Council.

"Awareness has increased around the issue, and the university has a responsibility to respond to that awareness," Ramsaroop said.

"We have got to get off this idea that we're in an ivory tower and what happens on campus doesn't affect us be-

cause first and foremost there are students who are homeless," he said, adding he hopes the university will have relief measures in place by December.

The vote comes on the heels of several recent commitments to tackle the problem of homelessness in Toronto.

Prompted by the efforts of a local coalition group, the City of Toronto recently declared homelessness a national disaster, a move that was matched by the cities of Ottawa and Napean, Ont., shortly after.

Concern for the city's homeless — estimated at between 50,000 and 100,000 — has also surfaced at the U of T.

Hancock says she has already received a slew of phone calls from students, faculty and graduates interested in helping with the university's line of action on the issue.

## CBC saved from increased government control

By MARY VALLIS

VICTORIA (CUP) — Supporters of the CBC won a major victory in the House of Commons last week when proposed legislation was amended to prevent arbitrary government control over the public broadcaster's executive.

Bill C-44 — which recommends changes for more than 150 independent government agencies — was on the way to its second and final reading when a section allowing the government to appoint or fire the CBC's directors and president "at pleasure," was removed.

The move came about when Sarmite Bulte, a back bench Liberal member of parliament, questioned Treasury Board President Marcel Masse about the section.

"What assurances can the minister give this House that the independence of the CBC will not be compromised?" asked Bulte.

Critics of the bill had said the section would open the CBC's doors to political interference from the House of Commons by allowing politicians to appoint or dismiss its president and board, turning the institution into a state broadcaster.

"The independent nature of the CBC must be upheld in law, in practice and in public perception . . . especially news broadcasts," said Bulte in a Nov. 16 letter to Masse.

Masse withdrew the section of the bill in question to

"reduce the uncertainty" surrounding the broadcaster's independence.

The government will retain the right to make appointments to the CBC's board of directors, however.

Friends of Canadian Broadcasting, a national lobby group that fought the bill, called the turn of events a victory for Canadians.

"We're thrilled," said Tim Woods, who works with the group in Victoria.

"This is one instance where grassroots lobbying made a difference."

Woods said the section was withdrawn largely because of public reaction against it, including a letter signed by 21 prominent Canadian journalists and a widespread e-mail campaign organized by the lobby group.

Even CBC president Perrin Beatty voiced his opposition to the proposed legislation.

Friends spokesman Ian Morrison said the campaign to stamp out Bill C-44 solidified support for the public broadcaster.

"There's a lot of support for the CBC," he said from Toronto.

The journalistic community came down squarely in defence of the CBC during the debate over the bill, which occurred at the same time Ottawa alleged CBC television reporter Terry Milewski was biased in his coverage of the APEC affair.

The timing was a volatile combination in the public's eye, Morrison said.



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
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