

s on campus — The Art of Evading the Issue

empt from the ethical problems created by the epidemic. Yet, nearly ten years after the syndrome has been identified, few Canadian universities have comprehensive guidelines to deal with students or staff who have been exposed to the AIDS virus.

"It is obvious there are more than a few students infected," says Ken Morrison, a researcher at the McGill Centre for Medicine, Ethics and Law. "The university campus is not exempt from the statistics affecting the rest of Canada."

As employers and as public institutions, universities have an obligation to give people with AIDS every opportunity to be

functioning members of society, Morrison says.

"People with AIDS experience a gradual breakdown of social support, and they soon find themselves in a position where they don't have much control over their lives. It is very important that their job and studies continue."

There are more than 80 universities and colleges in Canada. Only five are known to have policies prohibiting discrimination against AIDS carriers.

They are the University of British Columbia, Carleton University in Ottawa, Concordia University in Montreal, the University of New Brunswick and

Dalhousie University in Halifax. The University of Calgary is to adopt a similar policy this fall.

The University of Toronto, the country's largest post-secondary institution with 50,000 students and 12,000 staff members does not have any guidelines.

McGill University — despite being located in Montreal, the

need it, stampeding and panic and hysteria can really cloud your judgement. Just because it's an academic institution doesn't mean they aren't capable of hysteria."

That public institutions need an AIDS policy is illustrated by the Eric Smith case in Nova Scotia.

quate.

Current university policies may not be enough to protect AIDS carriers, says Royden Traynor, acting chairperson of the Students' Union of Nova Scotia (SUNS), which represents 20,000 students at six universities.

Dalhousie for example guarantees confidentiality to AIDS carriers, but subject to the limitations of federal and provincial laws, and to regulations requiring health information for employees' benefits packages.

UBC's policy, which is only five-paragraph long, states that "carriers...may continue working or studying unless they become incapable of carrying out their studies or threaten to endanger others."

According to Carleton's guidelines, the university is opposed to mandatory screening and testing. People with AIDS would be able to work, attend classes and use all recreational and residential facilities. However, the school can review each case individually and make "adjustments."

"It is very difficult to know one's rights when the policies are filled with these disclaimers," says Trainor. "They have more political sense than pure medical sense."

The universities' policies can also be invalidated by any provincial or federal legislations. In British Columbia, AIDS groups fear that amendments to the province's Health Act will allow the government to quarantine AIDS patients. Nova Scotia is also considering similar legislation.

AIDS activists say that ultimately laws against discrimination based on sexual orientation are needed to protect AIDS carriers because the two issues are linked in the public mind.

But to date, only Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba and the Yukon have banned discrimination against gay men in their human rights acts. The federal Charter of Rights does not include such protection.

"Very few people anywhere have any sense of how big a problem this could become for universities," says Traynor. "Those policies could ultimately be useless."



ts: Student group wants orientation in Act.

tia community of Barrington Passage threatened to keep their children away from classes. Smith's doctor had sent blood samples away for analysis without the patient's knowledge: the HIV-positive results were leaked to the community by the physician's secretary.

The HIV-positive result means Smith has been exposed to the AIDS virus.

The virus is passed through unprotected sexual intercourse or sharing needles. It blocks the body's immune system.

The Tory provincial government offered Smith a full-time job on the task force.

Nova Scotia Health Minister Joel Matheson said he will introduce legislation giving the province the right to quarantine people carrying the AIDS virus.

That announcement was made after a warrant was issued for the arrest of Scott Wentzell, a bisexual man charged with criminal negligence causing bodily harm for allegedly infecting a woman with the virus. Wentzell turned himself in: bail requirements include abstaining from sex.

British Columbia's Social Credit government passed quarantine legislation amendments in December over objections from AIDS groups who feared AIDS patients will be targeted.

"There is a lot of stigma around (AIDS) testing. This will undoubtedly drive people underground. I've already heard of people dropping out," said Kevin Brown, of the Vancouver People With AIDS Coalition.

The Nova Scotia government also turned down anonymous AIDS testing.

Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba and the Yukon have already included sexual orientation in their human rights legislation. An October 1985 report titled Equality for All which recommended protecting gays and lesbians in the federal Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms has yet to be acted upon.

However, a Canadian Human Rights Commission official said the act bans discrimination on the basis of disability, which the commission considers AIDS to be.

city with the second largest proportion of AIDS victims in Canada — does not have an AIDS policy either.

Universities are unable to adopt guidelines because they don't have a wider "philosophy" to deal with AIDS, says Richard Burzynski, executive director of the Canadian AIDS Society in Ottawa.

"Really, very little has been done. The university has to have information about what AIDS is. The education has to be there, and more than just a condom."

According to Fiona Nelson, a member of the Ontario Public Education Panel on AIDS who helped draft AIDS policies for a Toronto school board, guidelines are even more important at the university level where most students are sexually active.

"For goodness' sake, get the policy in place before you need it," she says. "Because if you

A sixth grade teacher in Barrington Passage, N.S., Smith was transferred last year to a non-teaching position when parents threatened to keep children away from his class because he was an AIDS carrier.

Smith's doctor had sent blood samples for analysis without his knowledge. The HIV (human immuno-deficiency virus) positive result were leaked to the community by the physician's secretary.

The subsequent controversy subsided only when the provincial government created a task force on AIDS and appointed Smith a member last fall.

When the task force recommended in October the introduction of a system of anonymous testing, Nova Scotia health minister Joel Matheson turned down the suggestion, saying that measures to ensure the confidentiality of AIDS carriers are already ade-