

# Students may cast votes at universities

OTTAWA (CUP) — University students may vote where they live while at school, if they consider that dwelling their "ordinary residence", Canada's chief electoral officer said today (Sept. 12).

The statement by J.M. Hamel appeared to contradict earlier indications that enumerators would hinder stud-

ents attempting to register to vote in their university constituencies in the October 30 federal election.

"If a student tells the enumerator his ordinary residence is room 105 in a certain university residence, well that's it," he said. "We cannot ask any more from a student than we can from any other citizen. We don't ask other people for proof of age or of citizenship. No more so can we ask for proof that a student is really on his own. If a student says he's on his own, then we'll have to accept that."

Under the new Elections Act of 1970 students lost the right to be enumerated in both their parents' home constituencies and in their university ridings. Instead, Parliament gave them the right to vote by proxy in their parents' constituency if they couldn't be there on election day.

Regulations from Hamel's office directed enumerators to determine whether students living "away from home" were "on their own". If they were, they could vote in their university riding, but if they were not they could be enumerated only at their parents' home.

"All we are asking enumerators to do if they are in doubt is to ask students if they would be willing to take an oath about the location of their ordinary residence if challenged on election day," Hamel said in an interview.

"It's a personal decision a student must make by his own conscience," he added.

In directives sent to local returning officers last January Hamel said "enumerators should be instructed that whenever an occupant of a dwelling describes his occupation as 'student' they should determine which of the four basic situations applies to that person by determining the relationship of that person to the other occupants of the dwelling and the nature and frequency of that person's occupancy."

(The four situations were married, single living at home, single living away from home, and single on their own.)

The tone of Hamel's instructions indicated enumerators would be scrupulous in ensuring that only students who were financially independent of their parents would be en-

umerated in university ridings.

But Hamel said today that students could vote in university ridings if they wanted to.

"I want to emphasize that we're not going to submit students to a means test," he said.

But local returning officers have contacted university residence officials to determine "which students, if any, should be enumerated", according to Hamel's earlier regulations.

Hamel explained today that the move was designed to save time, and that any student who was not included on the on the list provided by residence officials could meet an enumerator in a residence common room and get placed on the voters list.

"In Edmonton this morning we got a report that authorities in a university residence said that 150 students might claim the building as their ordinary residence, but now there will be as many as 700 on the list," he said.

"So residence authorities have nothing to do with the result. They're just saving us the time needed to knock on

every residence door and allowing us to allocate the appropriate number of enumerators," the chief electoral officer added.

The Election Act itself only mentions students in its section on proxies. All other rulings for student voting are interpretations from Hamel's office.

National New Democratic Party secretary Clifford Scotton said today he is certain students can choose where they want to vote, and is unaware of Hamel's memos indicating anything to the contrary.

"I have a daughter at York and I provide support for her but I consider her on her own. I expect she will vote there," he said. "The unquestionable right to vote where the student pleases must be established," he added.

Hamel claimed such a principle violates the spirit of the Election Act but that students could not be prevented from considering their university dwelling their ordinary residence if they were willing to swear it on election day.

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