

# Bagnall, students have civil confrontation

By Carolyn Ryan

Provincial Minister of Education Leone Bagnall's visit to UPEI on Sunday night revealed little new about post secondary education in Prince Edward Island. In fact, the Minister, admitting that she has trouble deciphering own Department's Student Loan forms, said she doesn't know what's going to happen federally with post-secondary funding. Bagnall was speaking at a regular meeting of the UPEI Student Union Council, to which President Michelle Dorsey had invited her in an attempt to increase communi-

cation between government and UPEI students.

The Minister was a graduate of this university in 1978 (BA) and 1979 (BEd), and, saying she "feels comfortable here", vowed that liberal Arts and Sciences programs are safe while she has any power in the matter.

"Heaven help them if they try to weaken (those) programs," she said to applause from some Councillors.

Other questions arose which were less popular. Ombudsman Jacinta Gallant, for example, asked Bagnall why elementary schools such as Lucy Maude Montgomery School in East Royalty are

getting rubber-floored gymnasiums while UPEI's Rink has been condemned and the quality of essential services and programs here is suffering.

"Ten thousand hours a year have been cut from our library over the last ten years and we practically have to wear mittens in the library while we're studying," Gallant told the Minister, who seemed slightly shocked.

Bagnall responded that over the last two years public school unit budgets have been frozen, and that in any case, 75% of the budgets go to salaries. She also said that the school in question had

been totally funded provincially, as part of a capital improvement budget.

She reminded the students that up until the economic crisis of two years ago, the P.E.I. government had always honoured the funding recommendations given it by the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission (MPHEC).

When asked if her government had ever made post-secondary programs a priority over public school buildings, Bagnall said that, while there are definite needs in the public school system, "I'd like to think there's been a commitment (to post-secondary education)."

The former classroom teacher turned politician said no federal EPF (Established Program Funding) transfer payments meant for the university have ever been channelled elsewhere.

"We've always been able to show the federal government exactly where their money is spent," said Bagnall, adding that since transfer funds for education and health services were split last year for the first time, this fact will be even more obvious.

Other subjects discussed in the question-and-answer meeting included:

— MPHEC financial commitments in other provinces. Presently, Prince Edward Island must contribute to the upkeep of programs not offered at UPEI such as law,

dentistry, medicine, forestry, and agriculture. Bagnall says the arrangement is one-sided now, but P.E.I. will see some income when the Vet College becomes operational and the other Maritime provinces start sending us funds.

— The relationship of the provincial government to UPEI, and the implications that may have on university autonomy, given past government statements which call for "the mobilization of the faculty and students at UPEI" to strengthen the provincial economy. Bagnall said the government gives funding to UPEI in a block and does not stipulate where money is to go.

— Other provinces' plans to streamline education to reduce redundancy in programs and cut costs. Bagnall says, "We're not going to be a satellite campus of anyone. Maybe they can be satellite campuses of us." She said she has been talking to the Nova Scotia Minister of Education and he has never mentioned any such plans.

— Vet College funding after the present Maritime cost-sharing agreement with the federal government expires in ten years. "If I'm still around in ten years, it will have to be looked at, of course." She hopes economic conditions will have improved so that the concern of P.E.I. will not be so pressing.

— The effect the cancellation of job creation programs such as Canada Summer Works will have on students and post-secondary education in general. She hopes something will be introduced to replace the lost programs, and says the provincial government will try to set programs in place "as much as is possible". Bagnall will be meeting with federal Minister of Employment and Immigration Flora MacDonald, and wants students to come to her with ideas on creating more productive jobs.

— Increases in the student loan floor for bursary eligibility from \$1800 to \$2400, meaning students must shoulder more in loan before getting provincial grants. Bagnall said, "That was the year the weekly allowance doubled. Rather than taking the bursary away altogether, we had to put a little more of the loan up front." She called the decision the "lesser of two evils."

Bagnall stayed about 45 minutes at the meeting, and left after wishing the students good luck in their schoolwork. Representatives from both of Charlottetown's commercial daily newspapers followed her from the room.

Student Union Vice President External Les Smith called the Minister's answers "the best political BS I've heard in a long time."



Leone Bagnall (center) answers a Councillor's question Sunday night. Left is Recording Secretary Ruth Edgett, and right is Speaker Robert Hanf. (Photo: MacLeod)

## Still no Barn lobsters: Board postpones decision

By John Pendergast

The UPEI Board of Governors has decided to stall a decision concerning the opening of a summer restaurant and lounge at the UPEI Barn.

The proposed restaurant and lounge would be mainly a lobster-supper operation, managed by Saga Foods Limited and staffed by university students. Many members of the SU Council and executive see this operation as a chance to relieve student unemployment exaggerated this summer by the deletion of 600 federal government youth jobs on P.E.I.

The original proposal for the operation was brought before the Student Union in September and approved.

Unfortunately, the Board of Governors has reservations about the proposal because it will compete with the established lobster supper outlets on P.E.I. Many Board members feel the move will generate hard feelings with the Island community.

However, SU President Michelle Dorsey views this argument as irrelevant, for the university already competes with the local commu-

nity for summer convention business.

Originally, Saga Foods, which holds the food service contract with the university,

wanted a decision on the proposal by January 16. However, the deadline has been postponed until Monday, January 21, so that the Board

can study the proposal and its implications for the Island tourist industry.

In the meantime, the Stu-

dent Union, along with six hundred extra unemployed students, must grit its teeth and wait.

## Job cuts will hurt parks

By Bob Stanley

The increased use of the National Park this summer, plus the decrease in services and increased entrance fees, could cause some big problems this season.

The increased use of our park will stem from the 100th anniversary of Parks Canada combined with PEI's own Tom MacMillan pushing PEI nationally in his position as Minister of Tourism. Both Islanders and returning tourists will expect to see at least the same services if not more due to a 300 per cent increase in entrance fees at the Park.

Unfortunately, services are going to be cut in many areas due to the eradication of Canada Summer Works projects which provided such

services as litter pick-up on the beaches and theatre troops.

In Cavendish, for example, the Environment 2000 program hired three students to work at Green Gables. The students, besides assisting the regular staff, were to entertain tourists at the site with skits or demonstrations of local skills. A letter to Tourism PEI said,

"One of the highlights of our vacation on Prince Edward Island were the visits we were able to make at Green Gables and the superb entertainment the young people who worked there did during the evening guided tours and the Sunday children's game.

"We sincerely hope you will be able to continue that format for all the visitors yet

to come. We will surely be back next summer and the children are already talking about going to visit Anne again."

This shows the value of this program. Another thing about Green Gables is the recent trip to Japan to boost relations with Canada in which Green Gables was an issue since the book is very popular over there.



Quote of the Week:

David Doiron, giving his bi-weekly report to the Student Union Council Sunday night: "Well, I attended a Senate meeting. That's what I am supposed to do. I'm a Senator."