

Memorial held for beavers killed on Waterloo campus

ADRIAN MA
CUP Ontario Bureau Chief

WATERLOO, ONT (CUP)—Students at the University of Waterloo held a memorial for beavers killed on campus this week.

The beavers had gnawed down several trees near walking paths over the past several months, and school officials were concerned about the safety of students and faculty—so the Administration hired a trapper to kill the four beavers. However, student Joanna Spencer isn't convinced the school took the best course of action.

"It kind of sickens me," the 22-year-old social development student said. Spencer said part of the reason she came to study in Waterloo was because she enjoyed the area's natural environment and the animals within it.

"It's shocking to think that a school that promotes wildlife would just promote it and take it away," she said. "I do understand in some situations you have to do it, but there were only four beavers."

Martin Van Nierop, the school's Director of Public Affairs, assured that the animals were killed in the most humane way possible, and that the school had consulted with the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Humane Society before deciding on the course of action.

But Jessica Walker, an environmental-studies student, thinks the Administration should have consulted the campus community as well.

"If there was notification of the

problem to the students and professors, another solution may have been found," Walker said.

Walker said ecological problems are discussed in her classes all the time, including the beaver situation.

"Many students had great alternative ideas, such as using chicken wire along the bottoms of the potential trees to deter the beavers," she said. "These alternatives may have been looked [at], but how are the students to know?"

"This is inexcusable behaviour that will indefinitely damage the University's former outstanding reputation among citizens and animal rights advocates alike."

NICOLE SIMONE DENTE,
YORK ANIMAL RIGHTS GROUP

"I think a lot of people are still wondering why the school felt that there was no necessity for the campus community to know about the situation."

Van Nierop also said one option was to relocate the beavers but after discussing the possibility with the Humane Society, the University learned that moving the beavers "could have caused them to starve or be attacked by other beavers already in

the area."

The University is now feeling the backlash. In addition to the 21 November memorial service, several of the school's alumni have called expressing their concern, and according to Van Nierop have said they're reconsidering donating to the school.

The York Animal Rights Group is also criticizing the decision.

"This is inexcusable behaviour that will indefinitely damage the University's former outstanding reputation among citizens and animal rights advocates alike," said Nicole Simone Dente, a spokeswoman for the campus group.

"We strongly recommend the University make amends by making a substantial donation to [an organization like] the Canadian Wildlife Federation or Animal Alliance of Canada," she added.

An internal e-mail is currently circulating among University staff to assist them in dealing with the "unwanted attention."

The memo explains that the school had explored other options, including covering up the trees by their water sources and leaving the beavers alone.

The memo also says the school used a licenced trapper and that "contrary to reports and misinformation" the trapper didn't drown the beavers.

The animals were killed in a conibear trap—a box that is set so the beavers swim through it. The sides of the trap come down onto the back of the beaver's neck, breaking the spine.

Québec med students caught in debate between province, doctors

Physicians withhold teaching and training from students to protest a labour bill they feel unfairly puts limits on wages and controls working conditions

MARK IHNATOWYCZ
The McGill Daily

MONTRÉAL (CUP)—After specialists and physicians decided to stop giving medical students practical training around 100 of them held a general assembly on 24 November in Montréal to decide how to react.

The meeting came in response to third- and fourth-year medical students being pulled from their hospital shifts last week, as tensions flared between the Quebec Federation of Medical Specialists (FMSQ) and the provincial government.

In the summer, the Québec government passed Bill 37, capping wages of specialist doctors and dictating working conditions in hospitals until 2010.

The bill also imposes heavy fines for participating in any action aimed at reducing or modifying their professional activities. Specialists in Québec are paid 33 per cent less than the federal average before taxes, and are now not allowed to strike or slow down their paid practices to protest. Teaching, however, isn't remunerated.

"It's a very fascist law," said Vanessa Nicolau, a medical student at McGill University who was taken out of her psychiatry rotation, at a press discussion on Thursday. "The only way to react to the law legally is to stop teaching medical students."

At the meeting, medical students

said they were worried about their patients, pointing out that, since they were no longer in hospitals, specialists and residents had more patients to handle.

"Some people don't realize that we as medical students have our own patients to take care of," said Breanne McCook, another McGill med student. "When medical students get pulled off the floor, those patients are having to be spread out."

"They're using us as pawns. I can see why, but it hurts."

JODIE TURNER,
THIRD-YEAR MEDICAL STUDENT

But Timothy Lussier, President of the McGill Medical Students Society, emphasized student-oriented goals.

"First and foremost, our concern is to make sure people understand the impacts on education and to try to encourage and pressure [the FMSQ] to solve it soon."

Many students said they respected specialists' decision to defend their rights, but resented being caught in the middle.

"They're using us as pawns," said Jodie Turner, a third-year medical student from Texas. "I can see why, but it hurts."

Joyce Pickering, Associate Dean of Medical Education and Student Affairs, was present to offer suggestions as to how students could resolve problems with their classes and clinical rotations.

She couldn't answer with certainty when the issue would get resolved; however, when asked whether students would lose their year of study, she responded that it was "very extremely unlikely."

But many students said the dispute exposed problems with Québec health care in general, and that, regardless of how the year was affected, the province wasn't doing a good job of encouraging them to stay.

"I'm from Québec and I want to stay here, but I might not if I don't get treated as elsewhere in Canada," said Sophie Tremblay, a McGill med student. "I'll stay for a few years, pay back my debts, and if it's not getting better, I'm going to leave."

Josée Larochelle, a Université de Montréal medical student and Vice-President (External Affairs) of the Québec Medical Students Federation, presented the timeline of events at the assembly, and answered questions about the group's stance.

"As voted on by the FMEQ, we denounce pressure tactics on students and encourage resolution between the two sides, but we do not enter the debate," she said.

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