

committee advises Ontario drinking age should remain

Toronto (CUP) - Ontario students can heave a sigh of relief now that a provincial advisory committee has recommended retaining the current drinking age of 19.

The report, submitted to Consumer and Commercial Relations Minister Monte Kwinter, also calls for extended hours of operation for drinking establishments, tougher restrictions on advertising, and looser guidelines on the sale of alcohol at sporting events.

"A philosophy of moderation and responsibility" was the driving force behind the committee's initiatives, according to project manager Rosemary Grange. Many of the report's more than 90 recommendations aim to reduce drinking and driving, cited as the most important alcohol-related problem.

Student reaction has been almost uni-

versally positive, following months of intensive lobbying to prevent an increase in the drinking age.

"We're very pleased," said University of Toronto student council vice-president Titch Dharamsi. "An increase would have been a big mistake."

Guy Giorno, president of the Young Progressive Conservatives in Ontario, also embraced the recommendations enthusiastically.

"We find it very positive," said Giorno, whose group had pushed to reduce the age to 18. "The majority wanted to raise it, and leaving it required willpower. Statistically it is still inequitable, but holding the line is, to us, acceptable."

John Bates, president of People to Reduce Impaired Driving Everywhere

(PRIDE), said he found the report deplorable.

"It's disastrous," Bates said. "Not only will the extension of drinking hours surpass subway closure times, but the refusal to increase the drinking age will cost many people, especially students, their lives."

Most of the recommendations can be implemented

by the government immediately, although Kwinter will probably bring them to the legislature first.

Should they be passed in their current format, there could be major reper-

cussions for students. Not only will pubs be allowed to stay open until 2 a.m., but alcohol could be served

at many campus sporting events.

"It's nice to see them bringing Ontario into the 20th century," Dharamsi said. "If (the recommendations) are enacted, you can bet that the student-run pub will be open later the very next day."

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budget of the Ministry of Youth was virtually eliminated last year following International Youth Year celebrations, leaving Charest a minister responsible mostly for announcing and promoting programs developed in other departments.

The government also promised shortly after the Katimavik cancellation to introduce a national youth

policy, but has yet to announce anything.

Howard McCurdy, New Democratic youth critic, believes the Conservatives have been silent on a youth policy because "this government really doesn't care about youth, not one bit."

Charest is not apologetic for the government

falling through on its commitment to develop a youth policy.

"I refuse to buckle under when people are pretentious and tell me I don't understand the problems of youth," Charest said. "I

refuse to play 'programitis' and throw out programs to whatever political animal is out there."



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