

IN BRIEF

St. FX hazing gets national interest, lots of media attention

St. FX students who were accused in one of Canada's national newspapers of running a hazing ritual are eager to set the record straight.

Those who took part in leading that activity, while admitting that it did take place, say many of the details were overstated.

"No one was hit with a stick," said one of the accused.

St. FX election draws 60.4 per cent

The St. Francis Xavier University campus was rife with anticipation Feb. 9 and 10 during the students' union election – not only to find out who won, but to learn how many had voted.

As the election results were announced in the campus pub Tuesday evening, Students' Union VP Communications Sarah Furey announced the voter turnout first.

"Here's the big one," she said, before screaming out the result.

A whopping 60.4 per cent – or 2,929 – students at the Nova Scotia university cast ballots, exceeding last year's record by 10 per cent.

With files from the Canadian University Press

UVic climate scientist pins hopes on Obama

VICTORIA (CUP) – There was a lot of celebration around the world when Barack Obama was sworn into office as the U.S. president in January. In Canada, one of the biggest cheers came from Andrew Weaver.

Weaver is a University of Victoria earth and ocean sciences professor, and a prominent member of the United Nation's Nobel Prize-winning intergovernmental panel on climate change.

"I'm absolutely ecstatic," Weaver said. "Obama is our single, biggest hope for dealing with global warming. The problem is enormous and his responsibility daunting, but I'm encouraged to see he has already surrounded himself with good people who are fully on side. He has also made a commitment to restore science to its proper place. Imagine, he actually used the words 'data' and 'statistics' in his inaugural speech."

However, Weaver's enthusiasm does not extend to Prime Minister Steven Harper's federal government. He says that Harper, who until recently, dismissed the notion of global warming, is now saying all the right words but failing to take the actions demanded by science.

"Aspirational goals are goals you have no intention of meeting, and intensity-based targets are nothing more than a license to pollute more efficiently," he said. "It's all smoke and mirrors, and if that's the best Harper has to offer, he should step aside and let someone else take over."

Weaver also claims Harper has made government policy without consulting the scientific community, has cut off public funding for research, and has taken Orwellian measures to muzzle Environment Canada scientists who wish to speak to the media.

Weaver does not agree with some of his peers who say it is too late to avoid a two-degree warming, the point considered to be the threshold for catastrophic climate change.

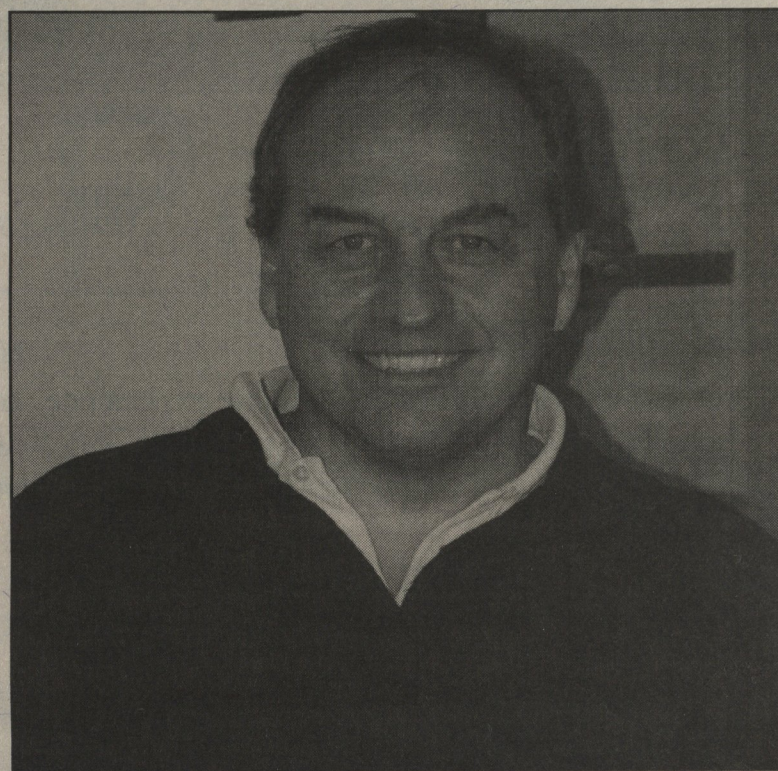
According to his calculations, Earth has already warmed 0.7 degrees since pre-industrial times. A further 0.6 degrees of warming is locked-in because of the delayed effect of greenhouse gases that have already been introduced to the atmosphere.

"That leaves us with wiggleroom of 0.7 degrees," he said. "But, time is not on our side, and people have to realize Pandora's box of woes is about to fly open. Beyond two degrees, we enter a realm of great danger and uncertainty."

Even at current levels of warming, there has been irreparable damage to ecosystems around the world. Weaver cites dying forests and the decline of the wild Pacific salmon as examples.

"The fish are moving north to where the water is colder. . . it's just one sign of many changes to come," Weaver said.

Most of Weaver's ideas are contained in his new book, *Keeping Our Cool*. The book explains in plain English the science of global warm-



Weaver thinks there's an opportunity to arrest climate change now that Obama is in office. The Martlet

ing and argues that climate change is the greatest threat facing human beings today.

"It's my contribution to public education," he said. "I just couldn't keep up with all the e-mails, interviews, and requests for presentations, so I decided to write a book that answers most questions people might have about the issue."

To help avoid the two-degree threshold, Canada will have to commit to massive emission cuts in the coming years, and eventually reduce greenhouse gases to near zero.

Although we are responsible for only two per cent of total global emissions, Weaver says, that does not detract from the fact that we are among the worst polluters on the planet.

"If we can't get our own house in order," said Weaver, "there's no way we can

expect or help others to do their part."

Weaver says binding agreements with hard caps on emissions are required. He favours a sweeping, revenue-neutral carbon tax along with education and heavy investment in new green technologies and infrastructure.

"New technology will provide half of the solution, while behavioural changes, including population control, will have to provide the other half. We live on a finite planet and it's broken logic to think that we can continue to grow indefinitely," said Weaver.

"The current economic downturn is a perfect opportunity for us to re-examine our values; let old, polluting industries die; and build a new, steady state economy that isn't dependent on fossil fuels."