

## Open books at Trent

Re "Trent needs funding fix" (April 30)

President Bonnie Patterson says the quality of a Trent University education will suffer if the province doesn't "fix" funding. University administrators have a fondness for casting blame everywhere but on themselves.

Under Patterson's administration Trent developed a number of financial problems, blame for which cannot be foisted upon government. The blight on the landscape known as Gzowski College is, by Trent's unaudited admission, \$3.2-million over budget. Another \$1.75-million shortfall resulted from budgetary reliance upon an overzealous estimate of student enrolment. These few examples have everything to do with internal management practices, or lack of same.

The public cannot know the extent of self-created financial difficulties at Ontario universities because they are exempt from Freedom of Information (FOI) legislation. Wisely, Bob Rae reported to government that FOI legislation should be extended to all postsecondary institutions.

I agree that a fundamental change in government funding is needed, but it is not simply to hand universities more (unaccountable) money. Universities should be made subject to FOI legislation and be forced to operate transparently and accountably *before* receiving additional funding. That's how we can best assure the quality of a Trent education does not suffer.

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