

February 1, 2007

## Twins press rights fight

**Complaint against U of O 'ludicrous'**

By MEGAN GILLIS -- Ottawa Sun

Two crusading 10-year-olds can't say if they learned to be activists before they were expelled from a University of Ottawa class dubbed the activism course.

"I can't answer that," said Sebastien Foster, presiding over his first press conference with his twin brother Douglas yesterday.

"I don't know what activism means."

The blond duo in matching green turtlenecks gave their opinions on how young is too young for university -- seven, they agreed -- and on the war in Afghanistan.

It was up to mom Wendy Foster to explain why she's filed an Ontario Human Rights Commission complaint of age discrimination. The U of O student said she registered the boys with the professor's blessing, only to have them expelled without explanation.

"It's rude, it's disrespectful, it's discriminating," she said. "It's just wrong."

The university says the kids didn't qualify because they don't have high school diplomas or work experience.

"I don't think there's any possibility the commission will find any wrongdoing on the part of the university," said Errol Mendes, a U of O law professor and former director of the Human Rights Research and Education Centre.

"Yes, maybe they (the university) should have been more diligent in finding out who is applying to them. They do have the right -- the fundamental right -- to determine entrance requirements."

Maureen Robinson, a reporter for the campus paper, says Foster's fight hurts students by suggesting their classes are so easy a child could pass them.

"I think it's absolutely ludicrous," she said. "I think it's an embarrassment to 30,000 students who pay a lot of money to attend a university with a lot of integrity."

She's frustrated that the issue has drawn attention away from real student issues such as the Day of Action against rising tuition Feb. 7.

What is newsworthy, she asked: "Two children who weren't allowed to enrol in university -- or a national uprising that affects almost a million Canadians?"



**Wendy Foster and her 10-year-old sons Sebastien, left, and Douglas arrive at the University of Ottawa's campus yesterday to address the human rights complaint they filed after the boys were deregistered from a course they were taking. (Tony Caldwell, Sun)**