

Jewish honour draws fans, fire
PROTEST: Davenport award
criticized

By **KATHERINA DEHAAS**

Paul Davenport was honoured last night -- to mixed reviews.

The president and vice-chancellor of the University of Western Ontario accepted an award at the Negev dinner, where he was honoured as a leader committed to diversity, tolerance and the defence of human rights.

"I'm humbled . . ." Davenport said of receiving the award presented by the Jewish National Fund of London.

"The list of previous awardees includes some very, very distinguished Canadians and it's a great honour for me and my family. It is especially important for me because the Negev dinner honours tolerance, respect for diversity, freedom of speech, all values that are integral to the University of Western Ontario."

But while Davenport was being feted inside, more than 100 protesters gathered in front of the Best Western Lamplighter Inn. Representing the Canadian Arab Federation, Palestinian Arab Society of London and Canadian Arab Society of London, they conducted a peaceful protest against Davenport's acceptance of the award.

Protester Suleiman Hadi of the Arab Federation said they also were protesting Davenport's support for the Jewish National Fund, which raises money to buy land in Israel.

"He (Davenport) is supporting the racial practices done (by the Jewish National Fund) and we don't like that," Hadi said.

Asked about the commotion outside, an unapologetic Davenport said he was aware his acceptance of the award wouldn't be celebrated by everyone.

"While I'd listened carefully to the criticisms, I was convinced that it was right for me to accept this award -- that it was based on values of respect and tolerance that I believe in strongly," he said.

