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| ***Province*** | ***Législature*** | ***Session*** | ***Type de discours*** | ***Date du discours*** | ***Locuteur*** | ***Fonction du locuteur*** | ***Parti politique*** |
| Novia Scotia | 53e | 1ere | Discours sur l’éducation | 1982 | Terence Donahoe | Ministre de l’éducation | Progressive Conservative |

**Nova Scotia: Education’s speech, First session of the Fifty third legislature, 1982**

TUE., MAR. 2, 1982

HON. TERENCE DONAHOE: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Knowing, as 1 do and as you do, that the late show on occasion has not attracted a tremendous attendance, and considering the honourable House Leader's remarks now, that when I conclude my remarks we will then go immediately to the late show, it might almost to a paranoid person be considered as an invitation from him that anybody who really feels like it, this might be an appropriate time for them to leave, because there will not really be anything of any consequence uttered between now and the time the late show begins. I should not be partisan, but I am inclined to think, having heard the subject matter of the late show, that there may not be anything of consequence come to the floor of the House prior to the late show ending either.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the honourable member for Cape

Breton South predictably enough makes comment about what I have done to the education

system. You know, Mr. Speaker, it puts me in mind that what we have done to the education system and what we have done in the conduct of our responsibilities as government,

Mr. Speaker, is so diametrically opposed to the approach that members opposite, who had

the opportunity 1970-78, to have the affairs of this province in their hands, it is unbelievable the difference. The difference is, Mr. Speaker, specifically stating, that the honourable

members opposite who had that opportunity and were entrusted with that responsibility by

the people of this province conducted themselves as if they believed they were in some kind

of a shell game. It was a big speech here and a big announcement here and a big party there

and hand out a few cheques there and create the semblance of activity and initiative and

interest and so on. Frankly, Mr. Speaker, it was nothing more than a shell game.

This government has, as I know you well know and as the overwhelming majority of

residents of Nova Scotia confirmed so eloquently with their ballots on October 6th, does

not operate that way at all and the perception' and the understanding of us by the electorate

is not the understanding and the conclusion which it took them a little long to come to

in connection with the members opposite.

You know, Mr. Speaker, government is a serious responsibility. You know that and all members I am sure on this side of the House and government members opposite know that and when you have the responsibility to govern, Mr. Speaker, frankly, you have to

think something and you have to do something. You have to stand for something and

you have to be something and I know that all Nova Scotians wallowed in the time of un

certainty and, frankly, had little or no service delivered to them through 1970-78.

I intend in the course of my remarks this afternoon, anticipating frankly that I would

have gotten off on a higher level but induced by the comments and the intervention from

the honourable member opposite, unfortunately, starting in the wrong vein because I do

believe I have some positive things to say and some of them relate to the very issue which

the honourable member for Cape Breton South raised just a moment ago.

May I send, through you, Mr. Speaker, compliments and best wishes to the honourable

member for Queens upon his re-election and re-appointment as Deputy Speaker. That

honourable member has, unfortunately, as you went know and all members know, Mr.

Speaker, been ill for some time. I gather rather seriously ill and I am sure that all members

wish him a speedy recovery and an early resumption of his place in this House and to all

members in all places in this House, Mr. Speaker, my sincerest congratulations on their

election or re-election to this distinguished Chamber. All of us know the anguish of election

campaigns and the elation of victory and all here in this Chamber had both of those experiences and sensations in October last and the months leading to October last.

But before I come to those comments, Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin if I may

by extending my personal congratulations and best wishes to you upon your re-election

to your esteemed and most important office as Speaker of this House. Your record in

previous sessions is exemplary and I look forward to a continuation of your firm but I

am sure most wise and eloquent direction of our deliberations here. I have no doubt and,

indeed, past performance would I am sure bear me out that your wisdom and your firm

rulings will have occasion to be directed my way before this session ends.

I trust that the spirit of buoyancy and optimism that all of us felt on election night,

all of us here in this Chamber today felt on election night, will underscore and be amply

evident in the work of all members in this House. I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that that

attitude and that approach will be very, very much evident in the work of all members of

the government during this session. .

Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure and the privilege, as you know, to represent Halifax

Cornwallis and Halifax Cornwallis, Mr. Speaker, that constituency bears the name of the

man who founded this city in 1749 and by reference even to its name, brings us back to

the very life and fabric of this city from its earliest moments until this day.

That is a constituency, Mr. Speaker, as I know again you are aware, that was represented in the past by one of this province's most beloved former Premiers and I refer, of

course, to Angus L. Macdonald. It is unfortunate, I might say, that the ability and level of

service delivered by that distinguished Nova Scotian during his time in this House, and all of his time in public life, is unfortunately not matched today by those who carry the banner

for the Party which he held and which he led with such distinction.

Well, the honourable member for Cape Breton South

must be getting awfully itchy in his seat over there, Mr. Speaker. He feels compelled to intervene periodically with these comments. The honourable member for Cape Breton South

will enlighten us, I am sure, later today and I am sure will attempt to do that on subsequent

days during this session of the House. I say to him that I do not believe that there is any

body on this side of the House, myself included, who has to take a back seat to the quality

of representation offered to our constituents and the degree or extent of commitment to

our public office responsibilities.

I say, with pride, that my ability to stand in this House and represent the constituency

I do is a continuation of an honour which has been a part of your family heritage in history

and mine, Mr. Speaker, because as most honourable members will know, our father had the

privilege and the honour to take his place in this House for some 14 or 15 years as a member

from Halifax Cornwallis, formerly Halifax South.

You know, Mr. Speaker, the sense of pride and that pride tempered by understanding

of the grave responsibility of membership which I feel as I represent the residents of Halifax

Cornwallis. That constituency, Mr. Speaker, is a very interesting one, and if I may say so, is

a very, very important constituency. I think I need only describe it briefly by reference to

certain of the institutions and undertakings which are situated there. And in no particular

order, I refer to many of those institutions: Dalhousie University is located there; St. Mary's

University; The Public Archives of Nova Scotia; Victoria General Hospital and all the related

health delivery service facilities that are connected with that hospital; The Grace Maternity

Hospital; The Nova Scotia Rehabilitation Centre; The Halifax Infirmary; The Technical University of Nova Scotia; Neptune Theatre; Halifax Container Pier and the related facilities;

Government House; Sir Frederick Fraser School for the Blind; and the Maritime Museum of

the Atlantic.

Certain honourable members opposite feel compelled on occasion to interject and

talk about the quality of representation. Mr. Speaker, I will talk for a moment, in a few

moments, about the Walker Commission, the Public Education Finance Commission, which

seems to have been the source of such distress to certain honourable members opposite, but

I would refer too, if I may for the moment, to one of the institutions which I just named,

The Sir Frederick Fraser School for the Blind.

Mr. Speaker, I became Minister of Education in October of 1978, September election

and an October swearing in ceremony, and I found upon my arrival there that there had been quite a bit of backing and forthing, quite a bit, quite a number of statements about

how we are trying to do this and that and the other thing with the Sir Frederick Fraser

School for the Blind. Frankly, I have tremendous pride and pleasure to be able to stand in

this House today knowing the construction is now underway for the construction of a new

Sir Frederick Fraser School for the Blind in the heart of my constituency. It will bring,

when it is completed, into the 1980's and the 1990's, the delivery of such important service

and care to those in our community and particularly those young people in our community.

who are unfortunately visually handicapped and impaired.

I saw some correspondence and I saw files which purported to indicate serious commitment and activity to a resolution of that most important problem that affected my constituency and affected visually handicapped people across Atlantic Canada when I became

Minister of Education, and I, as I say, have tremendous pride and pleasure in knowing that

I had very much a hand in bringing about the current construction which is now underway.

I have tremendous pride, as well, Mr. Speaker, in being part of a government which has

invested millions of dollars in the continued development of the Victoria General Hospital

with cancer treatment facilities and a tremendous improvement in the range of health care

delivery at that institution. At the Halifax Infirmary, the development of the Oncology

Centre, this government has been very kind to Halifax Cornwallis, Mr. Speaker. I have

tremendous pride and pleasure in being a part of bringing those new benefits to my constituency.

The litany of institutions and buildings to which I referred, Mr. Speaker, do not

simply, I trust, convey the message that I consider the existence of those bricks and mortar

terribly important in themselves. But they are, Mr. Speaker, indicative of the academic

and the cultural and the business and the historical and the medical and the commercial

fabric, and frankly, in many senses, in relation to those activities and undertakings, perhaps

almost the core and the heart and the soul of those various undertakings and initiatives and

activities in this great city and in this province.

One need only look at my constituency of Halifax Cornwallis, Mr. Speaker, to find the

leading institutions and organizations in the professions and in the arts. My constituency

houses in their personal and corporate capacities, the leaders of the professions, medicine,

dentistry, law, nursing, accountancy, in dramatics and most importantly, in the context of my ministerial responsibilities, in education. My constituency is home for many of the most

well to do residents of this city and 'of this entire province. At the same time, Mr. Speaker,

it is home to a number of thousands of people, young and old, who through no fault of

their own, require great care, attention and compassion of all levels of government. I am

most pleased and proud to be a part of this government, Mr. Speaker, a government which

has in its first term of office just recently completed, exhibited a strong and continuing

commitment to those most needing help, the seniors, in particular, the disabled, the social

service recipients, all persons and all aspects and facets of the community fabric of Halifax

Cornwallis.

Mr. Speaker, my constituency is home as well to many, many thousands of people who

rent their residential accommodation. This government is committed, as evidenced already,

Mr. Speaker, by ministerial statements made to this session of the House to continuing a

Rent Review Program and this government recognizes a need for such a program and recog

nizes as well that both tenant and landlord must be considered and equitably treated. There is a growing concern in my constituency and there is a growing concern in other parts of the province to the effect, Mr. Speaker, that retaliatory action is being taken and unfortunately with, some might say, alarming frequency against tenants seeking legitimate recourse under the law in terms of their dealings with their landlords. I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that I will impress and I will insist that our legislation be amended to ensure that such action of retaliation will not be possible or tolerated under the law.

Another most important area, Mr. Speaker, relating again to housing accommodation, namely the conversion of rental units to condominium units must be addressed and I am pleased to have had a hand in including a commitment to that effect in the Speech from the Throne. I do not have an exact percentage figure but I would guess a very, very high percentage of apartment construction in the City of Halifax, Mr. Speaker, in the last ten years, a very, very, high percentage of that construction took place south of J ubi1ce Road which is the northern boundary of my constituency.

I will make no effort to disguise the pride and the pleasure with which I now refer, not for the first time in this House, to a major initiative taken by the government of which I am privileged to be a member and for which I have been particularly privileged to discharge for more than three years, the office of Minister of Education. The initiative to which I refer was the appointment of the Commission on Public Education Finance, now generally referred to as the Walker Commission after its able chairman, Mr. George Walker, and the subsequent implementation of many of the recommendations made by that commission.

When I first took the office of Minister of Education in October of 1978, I attempted at that time and immediately, Mr. Speaker, to set about with the aid of valued and experienced advisors within and beyond the Department of Education to identify the most pressing and vital problems facing our education system and to initiate and to support the development of plans and the making of decisions that would lead to a successful attack upon those problems. It soon enough became pretty clear, Mr. Speaker, that the greatest and the most pressing problems facing our school system at that time were related to the system of finance and administration of the public schools of this province.

As many present will know, the last major reform of the system of financial support and administration for the public schools had taken place more than a quarter of a century ago, following the report of the Royal Commission of which the late Justice Vincent Pothier was chairman and sole member. The reforms introduced by Mr. Justice Pothier's recommendations served the public schools, their students and their teachers in their time and served them well in their time. However, long before 1978, Mr. Speaker, changing circumstances and a series of ad hoc decisions and expedient measures had brought the system to apoint where neither the intent nor the achievements of the reform of the middle fifties was any longer recognizable. The system had been ad hoced and band-aided and tinkered with and tampered with to the point where the Pothier Formula, frankly, was no longer recognizable at all.

Long before I became Minister of Education, I had occasion, as I am sure you did, Mr. Speaker, knowing your profession, I had heard long before that time as most present in this House, yourself included, had heard, complaints voiced on every side about the inequities and the rigidities and the inadequacies of what had become almost an unworkable series of arrangements. On becoming minister, I found that wherever I went and with whomever I spoke', school board members, municipal councillors, wardens, mayors, members of this House, teachers, leaders of the teaching profession and informed citizens everywhere, I heard the same call for a long overdue examination of the system and for the introduction of significant reforms.

Distilled to its essentials, Mr. Speaker, the general and I think almost universal view which had been recommended by previous studies and reports and which had from time to time been supported by the advisors of other ministers, was that two major changes were required. The first was the introduction of a fairer and more equitable, more predictable and more understandable system providing financial support, provincial and municipal, to the public schools, a system that would make possible more effective and consistent long-range planning, a more sensitive and ready response to local and regional priorities and differences and while assuring an adequate base of provincial financial support, ensure a continued municipal input at an affordable level.

The second generally identified need was for the introduction of a new arrangement for the governments and administration of the schools that would make it possible to provide the kind of leadership, organization and program delivery throughout the province that had been up until then available only to those areas with a population base and professional staffs large enough to provide for adequate professional leadership and a diversification of programs suited to today's needs. These then were the pressing needs, Mr. Speaker, and this was the unhappy and univergally unpopular situation, needs and a situation I might add, that had been neglected and ignored by our predecessors for nearly a decade of the tinkering to which I referred.

In response to these needs and to the situation, Mr. Speaker, I recommended, and the government approved, the appointment in August of 1980 of the Commission on Public Education Finance with Mr. George Walker, to whom I have referred, as Chairman, Mr. John LeVangie, Chief Director of Finance and Budgeting for the Department of Education as Secretary, and His Worship Mayor Daniel Brownlow of Dartmouth as the third member. In my first meeting with the commissioners, held immediately after their appointment, I stressed to them the urgency of the situation.

The neglect of years had brought us, in public school finance and administration, to the point where action, action not talk and not, maybe we will get around to it, and well it would be nice for us to think about it, but action, action was necessary. It was important for us, and important for us through those commissioners, to undertake the fullest possible investigation and to make the most comprehensive report possible in the shortest possible space of time.

Indeed, Mr. Speaker, I charged them, those commissioners, with what appeared to some to be an almost impossible demand, that the work be done by March 31, of the following year, 1981. It is now history that the commission travelled indefatigably about this province, listened to scores of presentations, if memory serves me correctly, something in excess of 120 presentations, met with and discussed problems with school boards, municipal units, professional educators and the general public.

All of that activity, that action, that commitment, to wanting to find the problems and recommend appropriate solutions. All of that activity, Mr. Speaker, produced a comprehensive report with recommendations for intelligent and effective action to deal at last with the financial and administrative problems that had for so long beset the school system. Those commissioners did all of that and presented the report on schedule on March 31,

1981.

I would be remiss, Mr. Speaker, if I failed at this point, and I intend not to fail, to express once again on my own behalf, on behalf of the government of the Province of Nova Scotia and, I am confident, on behalf of this whole House and on behalf of all of the

residents of this province, our gratitude and our admiration to the members of that Public Education Finance Commission.

Those of us present, Mr. Speaker, and I must say that I am happy to note that there are a great many present on this side of the House, and somewhat fewer on the side opposite who were members of the previous House, when the previous House dissolved prior to the genera] election in October, those who were here will recall that on May] ], ] 98], less than two months following the submission of the commission report, and as clear evidence of the urgency with which government regarded the need for reform in public education finance and administration, ] was able to announce in this Chamber, from this place, the government's decision to implement a majority of the recommendations of the report, and as announced by His Honour in the Speech from the Throne opening this current session, I will introduce legislation in this session to provide the legal framework for those essential reforms.

We have not waited however for that either, Mr.Speaker, knowing of the pressing need and sure of the general support arid approbation of this House, and of the people of Nova Scotia, in acting as swiftly as possible to bring relief to municipalities and to school boards, and to institutions, with these long overdue reforms. We have pressed ahead with, frankly, astonishing and heartwarming cooperation, Mr. Speaker, from responsible municipal leaders, school board leaders throughout this province, from full school boards and professional educators, and I must say with a dedication far beyond the reasonable call of duty of the staff supporting me in the Department of Education. We have as you and all members know, already introduced and have underway the essential reforms.

I think, Mr. Speaker, that members of the House will generally be familiar with those reforms. The old administrative structure under which more than 60 school boards were in existence to administer schools with a total population of fewer than 200,000 youngsters, under which there were school boards responsible for the education of no more than several hundred students, under which, consequently, many boards were simply unable to provide the diversification of program and of staff and of services necessary to a quality education in the world of today.

We have replaced this system, Mr. Speaker, with essentially the 2] district boards which were recommended in the commission report. I must say again, as I am sure you are aware, that regrettably there is a single exception of one small community whose municipal leaders alone in all Nova Scotia decided not to cooperate with their neighbours in this effort to provide a better educational service for a]l. Already, under interim arrangements which I shall ask this House to ratify and endorse during this session, district administration is underway.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, and most significantly, we have increased the level of provincial support to municipalities and to school boards, for education, substantially by many millions of dollars. In the coming year, in the current year, calendar ]982, there will be approximately $60 million more spent in public education in Nova Scotia than was the case in calendar ] 98]. As a group, the municipalities of the Province of Nova Scotia, Mr. Speaker, in calendar ] 98] spent something in the order of $91 million as their contribution to the public education finance requirement in this province. That same group, the existing municipal units of Nova Scotia, will in calendar] 982, remembering, Mr. Speaker, that the costs will be approximately $60 million more than they were in 1982, the requirement from the municipal units as a group across the province will be fewer municipal dollars in 982 than was the case in 198] and fewer, ] might add, by something close to $] million.

I know that the changes and the reforms are, in some ways, difficult to swallow, they are difficult in some ways for some people to feel comfortable with and they bring about a new circumstance and a new situation in communities where, up until the implementation of the report, the delivery system had been for many years undertaken in a way which had become understandable and comfortable and nobody, Mr. Speaker, enjoys being thrust into a situation of change, but nobody, Mr. Speaker, either, was happy, as I said at the outset of my remarks, with a situation which annually increased the burden to the municipal taxpayer to provide for the ever escalating costs of the public education system.

We have, as a result of the implementation of the recommendations of the report, introduced a system of formula funding by which all areas of the province will be funded on a more equitable and a fairer and a more predictable and a more reasonable system than ever has been the case before. We have provided for, as well, Mr. Speaker, for the first time, much needed additional and special grants as part of the formula arrangement for special education to meet the needs of exceptional children in this province; for the support of Acadian schools to help maintain and preserve the culture and language of our Acadian fellow citizens in this province; for adult educa1:ion; and for driver education. We have, while increasing provincial support, at the same time, by implementing a system of global budgeting, provided a greater degree of local autonomy for the district school boards.

Previously, as you, Mr. Speaker, will be aware I am sure, there was a set of formulae in sharing rates which were in place. It was the requirement and the obligation of school boards across Nova Scotia, if they wanted to have an extra teacher to provide a particular part of the program or if they wanted to develop their program indeed in most any way, the usual routine was for them to be compelled to come to Halifax to the minister of the day, to myself and all of my predecessors and frankly almost with hat in hand, come and ask for cost-sharing on undertakings which they at the local level considered to be appropriate and necessary expenditures and to provide services which they at the local level considered to be in the best interests of the young people they were attempting to serve.

The importance of the global budgeting approach, Mr. Speaker, is that again within the limits of the total budgetary formula rates, mandatory provincial contributions and mandatory municipal contributions, it is no longer necessary for the district school boards of Nova Scotia to come to the minister, to me or any future minister, to ask for the permission to spend monies in certain ways. They have at the local level the opportunity and the right, as I believe and have always believed it was important that they have, the authority to make the decision at the local level as to what elements or what parts or what components of the system which would be delivered to the young people in the communities would be most important and most beneficial to those young people.

Now, that carries with it, as I am sure you will appreciate readily, Mr. Speaker, and all members do, that carries with it a tremendous responsibility for those who will be members of the district school boards of Nova Scotia who are now members of interim district boards and in the future following elections and appointments in the fall, members of permanent district school boards because it is not easy and believe me, I know, because I have been in the Department of Education and have been receiving the briefs and the presentations and the petitions and the supplications and the approaches from every community of Nova Scotia. Now it will be possible and, frankly, more appropriate in my view and in the view of the government, that the decisions which are sought by those who are served by the board at the local level will now with greater degree of flexibility and authority than was ever the case before, be able to be made by those people who are their neighbours, who live in their own communities, and who live and work and have their own families in the communities which the district boards are serving.

I might say that one of the elements of the implementation process, Mr. Speaker, following our receipt of the recommendations of the Public Education Finance Commission that generated some media attention and, indeed, there were those, if I am not mistaken, in this House who decided to divest themselves of some comment on them and that was, and one which I think of in particular, was the whole question of school board composition.

If one read the press for, while there was rather a flurry at one time, Mr. Speaker, one would almost get the impression that there was a retrograde step being taken by virtue of this government, the Premier and the Cabinet of this government, determining to continue

with the one-third/one-third/one-third; one-third provincially appointed, one-third publicly

elected; one-third municipally appointed school board arrangement.

That, in fact, Mr. Speaker, has been the school board composition in the Province of Nova Scotia since those who were the government previously made the change to the School Boards Membership Act and I found it interesting that even some of those who were a part of that government felt that the maintenance of that kind of a system was perhaps somehow inappropriate. It was they who, 'frankly, as a compromise measure, if I understand the dynamics of the day correctly, as a compromise measure, those who were the former government prior to 1978, were urged by many to go further in terms of the elected process to school boards of Nova Scotia but they decided as a compromise and], quite frankly, believe as a workable compromise to go with amendments to the School Boards Membership Act or introduction of the School Boards Membership Act which brings us the one-third, one-third, one-third result.

I have said in this House on previous occasions that upon this government assuming office as we did in 1978, that it was not inappropriate or undesirable at all for us to have further experience with that arrangement. That still is my view, Mr. Speaker, and particularly now in light of the fact that the financial fabric and the administrative side of the public school program delivery system is being changed at this point.

I believe, whether there are those who want to be critical of me for believing it, that is

their wish and they can feel what. they want to feel as far as I am concerned, but] say

frankly that I am proud to refer to those things which have been done by way of implementation, by way of commissioning of the report, by way of being a part of a government which once the study was commissioned, took the time and the trouble and continued the commitment to read it and to make some decisions in relation to its recommendations. ] am

pleased to be part of a government which has undertaken what] frankly personally consider

to be a major achievement in tackling boldly and effectively and with dispatch, critical problems that confronted others for so long.

] might say, Mr. Speaker, that the approach that this government took was not unknown before, and by that] mean the approach that we commission a study and have people of quality and ability to take a look at a problem for us and provide us with advice and report and recommendations. That approach was indeed not unknown before.

When certain gentlemen opposite in this House were members of the government in this province, were the people who by virtue of their numbers were charged with the responsibility of doing something and delivering service and attempting at least to overcome difficulties and ills faced by those whom they purported to serve, when certain members opposite were members of the government of this province, they will recall] am sure, as you will, having established a commission to study the very problems to which the Walker

Commission was addressed and other problems as well. That was a commission of some very

able Nova Scotians with very, very ample financial support.

I might say it is my understanding, although I do not have the figure committed to

memory, that the report to which I refer, the Graham Commission Report, was a very

expensive study indeed. Even without having the exact figure, I know from my memory

that when I had occasion some considerable time ago to see an approximation of the cost of

that study by comparison to the cost involved in the Public Education Finance Commission,

the Walker Commission, they simple do not compare as to costs at all.

That former study commissioned with tremendous trappings by the previous government of which members opposite, certain of them were a part, that study, Mr. Speaker,

extended over quite a lengthy period of time. Over a period of years, and it resulted in a

major and a massive report. That report, from the minute it was off the presses until today,

adorns the shelves, I am sure, of the offices or libraries of those members opposite who felt

it appropriate to expend large amounts of public money to have it undertaken. It adorns the

shelves of the offices of many people in this province.

The government of the day, having taken that step, having attempted to buy time and

avoid the issue, to put it under the rug, the government of the day with the same failure

frankly, Mr. Speaker, of nerve which distinguished their performance in so many fields,

from highways in the Valley to road signs in Acadian districts of this province, to almost

any field, large or small, in which some courage and which some initiative and in which

some action was required, that government, and again I repeat there are members in this House today who were part of that government, failed to act and did little to improve the

situation as the result of such a massive and extensive and expensive effort, that it had

itself initiated.

So, I contrast, and I am happy to contrast, Mr. Speaker, this performance and the performance of this government with that of our predecessors. Disagree, if you will, those who

are intent to do so, disagree if you will with some of the recommendations of the com

mission. Disagree, if you will, with their. enactment by government. I am prepared to defend

the implementation of each and every one of those recommendations implemented. I am

satisfied and I am convinced that the implementation of this report and the recommendations in it are certain to lead to a great improvement over the next number of years, in the

educational service available to the young people of this province. I repeat, disagree if you will, but I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that it is difficult, I find it difficult at least, to see

how any can disagree with my statement that where we saw a problem, and there was not a

person in Nova Scotia who was involved in, interested in, knowledgeable of, or cared about

public education finance and administration in Nova Scotia. There was not one. Not one,

who did not think there were some very, very serious problems.

So you can disagree with my statement and with some of the recommendations but I

do not imagine, Mr. Speaker, that it is likely going to occur to you to be terribly sensible of

those who will disagree with my statement that where we saw, as a government, saw a

problem, we looked it straight in the face and we sought a solution.

Where we recognized an urgent need, we sought redress. Where we saw the need for

some bold and imaginative and courageous decision-making and leadership, this government

was able to find that nerve, to take those initiatives and to make the decisions to deal with

the problems. We did not sit and wring our hands, running from spot to spot in the dyke,

attempting to stick a finger in the breach, but commissioned the best study and advice

available and then acted upon it.

Mr. Speaker, I repeat that I am proud that circumstances have placed me in a position

where I was able to be a part of that great effort on behalf of the young people of this

province, and on behalf of the province as a whole. It has been a privilege and an honour

and I am proud to stand here today and refer to those results. As I say, there will be some

who disagree and all I say to them is that if the nature of their disagreement and the

rationale of their disagreement is on the same plane and on the same level as I gather some

disagreement was prior to events of October 6, then I say I will probably never have agreement from people who think that way.

People who think, Mr. Speaker, and could say to public audiences, and there were such

people in the Province of Nova Scotia prior to October 6, and indeed some since, who

would say oh, no, it is true, you know it is true there will be more dollars available to our

community to provide educational service, there will, by bringing a greater number of

professionals together under one board administration, there will be a greater flexibility

available to district board members and to the boards to make decisions on providing a wider and broader and deeper rang5 of programs, but I think education is going to suffer.

I sat in a place, Mr. Speaker, on a day previous and heard that kind of line and rationale. Mr. Speaker, I am a realist, I think. The fact of the matter is that there will be

those who when a particular child has a hangnail, any time between today and 24 months

from now and that hangnail happens to be noticed in the classroom, somebody is going to

suggest that the Walker Commission is the reason for the hangnail.

I am sure that there are those who want to be critical, there are those who want to take

shots, there are those who are, and if they are not, they should be embarrassed and self

conscious that they had the opportunity as part of a government to do something and to do

something sensible and important for public education finance and administration in Nova

Scotia, and sat and twiddled their thumbs and commissioned reports which purported to address the question which they then promptly proceeded to ignore. There are those who

for all kinds of weird and wonderful reasons will want to take issue. I understand that. I live

in the real world, or I attempt to. There are some very unreal people in the real world.

All I say to those who are critical is that it is clear that in the last couple of months

since January 31, 1982, there have been many, many, many municipal leaders, Nova Scotia

Teachers Union officials and leaders, School Boards Association leaders, Union of Nova

Scotia Municipalities leaders and members of this House who are not members of my Party, come to me and say, you know, it has' been a rather rocky road coming to January 31, and

you pushed pretty hard and you twisted arms on occasion pretty hard and you have beat up

on us pretty hard, but you know, Mr. Donahoe, Mr. Minister, it is amazing how it is starting

to fall into place. It is amazing, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Minister, their reference to me, it is amazing how the municipal boundaries, the town boundary that used to separate us so greatly

and used to have situations where youngsters would drive through municipal units of this

province, through, start in one and go through another, end up in the one they started in,

pass four schools on the way to go to the other school because the four that they passed

happened to be owned by some other municipal unit.

It is amazing to me, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, and I understand that I pushed very

hard and that I was considered by many to be pretty offensive in certain situations. But

what I did, I did as part of a government policy to bring about important improvement and

change and we believe it to be important improvement and change. It was important and

essential, frankly, being charged with those responsibilities as I was, that there were occasions when I was pretty tough and pretty strident in my view. However, I believe that

~hose of goodwill and tolerance, those who are prepared to be supportive and assist us, assist us as a government and we will be government for the next number of years and in the context of the report I am talking about, the crucial years, it is important for those who have had concerns and indeed those who still do, to share those with us in a way that will make it possible for us to participate with them, and they with us, to ensure that difficulties which do confront us as a provincial government, municipal units, and district school boards, that they are handled in a way that will be in the long term benefit and interest of the young people to be served.

Mr. Speaker, I had expected that I might have time to make some remarks about another of my responsibilities in the Department of Education which I consider to be extremely important and, indeed, crucial at this time and I am thinking, of course, of the situation as it now pertains in regard to EPF, Established Program Financing, the situation of the Government of Canada and their attitudes as expressed by such people as the honourable Secretary of State, Mr. Regan, and the Minister of Finance, Mr. MacEachen, and indeed, the Prime Minister himself.

I gather, by reference to the clock, I will not really have an opportunity to get into that matter in any length but I do want to say, Mr. Speaker, that, well, perhaps I will wind down in a moment but perhaps just to make reference to, and then I will table, an article and a headline which appeared in the Toronto Star, February 22nd, 1982, and there is a picture of Gerald Regan. "Minister says provinces must give Ottawa credit". The headline is, "We get no credit for funding, Regan. Ottawa wants recognition for health care, education spending." And a quote from the article, "From now on, Ottawa wants to get direct political credit. . . " Mind you, political credit. "From now on, Ottawa wants to get direct political credit for whatever it spends, whether it is in a federal or provincial jurisdiction and is prepared to go around the provinces by giving universities or students direct aid if it cannot make a new deal with the provincial governments."

Mr. Speaker, that is part of the same old shell game. Have you ever in all of your life, Mr. Speaker, seen a conversion, the very man who now masquerades as Secretary of State for the Government of Canada and who utters -the federal line, the Trudeau line, the centralist line, and who stood on the floor of this House for quite a number of years and stood occupying the job that in the political life of this province is the most important, the Premier of this province. He made and I have read some of them and on future days I will have occasion to refer to them, he made some speeches and as you well know and as all members know here in this House who do know him and know him at all personally and have seen him perform publicly, the former Premier and the present Secretary of State, a very, very able and articulate man, and he made some very able and articulate speeches on behalf of the post secondary education system of this province.

He made them, I thought, because he believed that it was important that the responsibilities of provincial and federal govern men ts, in their dealings with the post secondary education system of this province, that the life and the fabric of the system, the quality of the education in the system was the essential and the crucial element and the element and the component which could not be at risk.

I now watch him, Mr. Speaker, as I know you do and as I know all Canadians do, talk not about what is going to happen to post secondary education in Nova Scotia, but as to how many political marks he and Mr. Trudeau and Mr. MacEachen and their federal colleagues are going to get for whatever dollars they spend. I want to hasten to say, and

t have done it on previous occasions, as you know, in this House, that the Government of Nova Scotia is extremely dependent on federal government assistance in post secondary education.

I have said to Mr. Regan and I have said to his predecessor, Mr. Fox, when he was Secretary of State, and I mean it, it might sound like a flippant remark, but I mean it, I will buy paid advertising in the public newspapers of this province, Mr. Speaker, to tell Nova Scotians about the extent of the federal participation in post secondary education, if he wants to get some credit for the funding. What is distressing, Mr. Speaker, is that when you look at the federal posture now in regard to post secondary education funding, I have some real concerns as to whether or not there is an interest in education as much as their

is in accountability, political accountability and political visibility for the expenditure of those monies.

Most frustrating to us, Mr. Speaker, to me and my present incarnation at least, is that we have in recent times been dealing with the Secretary of State and dealing through a couple of telexes, and I received, 'as Minister of Education in this province, as did all Ministers of Education in all of the other provinces, a telex, and I will table a copy, from the Secretary of State, February 16. In that telex there were references to a position which the Prime Minister had put on the table in the waning moments of the First Ministers Conference on the Economy in Ottawa held a month or so ago, and Mr. Regan, in his capacity as Secretary of State, communicated with me and all ministers across the country and laid down some rules as to how he and the federal government were going to participate in the funding of post secondary education.

He talked, Mr. Speaker, about certain objectives as well that the federal government had. They want to talk about mobility. The fact of the matter is that the post secondary education system or, the population in this country is so mobile that we receive in Nova Scotia annually something in the order of 2,000 young people coming from parts outside of Nova Scotia to avail themselves of the educational opportunities here. I do not know, frankly, whether there are any barriers, and I have heard no Nova Scotian youngster come to me and complain of them, to enable them to have access to post secondary educational opportunity elsewhere. And he wants to talk about mobility. We are ready to talk about mobility, Mr. Speaker.

He wants to talk about accessibility and he is the same Secretary of State, and I understand, I said earlier, that I try, as difficult sometimes as I know it is for me, to live in the real world and the real world is that money does not grow on trees for the federal government anymore than it does for us but they certainly have far greater resources than we do.

They have a piece of legislation on their Books which we have been, as a province, and all provinces have been asking to have amended because it is high time, it is long overdue for it to be amended, and it is a piece of legislation called the Canada Student Loans Act. Mr. Speaker, it has been five and a half years approximately since there has been any meaningful amendment to the Canada Student Loans Act.

Over that five and a half or six years, the expenditure in this province, as all members would know I am sure, on the supplement to the Canada Student Loans Program, which was always considered when the Canada Student Loans Act was first enacted to be nothing more than a supplement, the bursary component, has now turned out over those last five or six years to have grown from a situation where approximately 3 million of Nova Scotia

taxpayers' dollars were being spent in direct bursary aid to supplement the Canada Student Loans Program and it is now at the point where this year we will be in the range of $9.5 million to $10 million as a supplement to that program.

I talked to the Secretary of State about that, and all of the Ministers of Education across the country do, and I do not have any reason to think, after three years of talking to him and his predecessor, Mr. Fox, that the Government of Canada, Mr. Speaker, is serious about accessibility, because when we talked to him about the Canada Student Loans Act, the stock answer has been, notwithstanding a very important and detailed and helpful study, participated in jointly by all of the provinces through the Council of Ministers of Education of Canada and the Government of Canada, it is going to turn out to be this year's answer to the Graham Commission I am afraid, the study is there and there are some very helpful recommendations as to how, if he wants to talk about accessibility we can do it, he can do it and he can amend the Canada Student Loans Act as he is being urged by me and as I am pleading with him to do and as are all members.

His stock answer, Mr. Speaker, is we are thinking that maybe what we will do is up the loan limits so that the young people who wan t to have access to post secondary education opportunity in this province will have the opportunity to borrow more money. Well, that is important that there be greater amounts of money available but all that does, Mr. Speaker, particularly when you match that kind of an attitude with his colleague, Mr. MacEachen's attitude that what he proposes to do is tear apart the heart and the soul and the essentials and the fabric of the Canadian economy which is causing businesses to go out of business at record rates and so on and is causing people to have a harder and more difficult time to find gainful employment and generate revenues which will enable them to in turn once they have undertaken a loan to pay that loan off.

Mr. Regan's response as Secretary of State in relation to student loans and Canada Student Loans Act is we will let you borrow more. His pal, Mr. MacEachen is creating an economic climate which is making it more and more difficult for the people who will have to payoff those loans to have the opportunity to have gainful employment to have the resources to payoff the loans. That, in overly simplistic terms but frankly not very far from the mark kind of terms, Mr. Speaker, is the kind of unfortunate attitude that we are now in with the honourable Secretary of State.

I saw you indicate to me that I have very few moments left. That was almost about as many minutes ago as you told me I had minutes, but may I close with this.

Mr. Regan sent this telex that I referred to and again I say I will table it. In it he says, "In return for full provincial endorsement of the federal offer with respect to other aspects of fiscal arrangements, the federal government offers to continue the current EPF transfer mechanism including both base year and escalator arrangements for post secondary education programs through fiscal year 1983-84 subject to the following stipulations." There are all kinds of them, those accessibility, mobility, accountability, his visibility stuff are all a part of those other stipulations.

Interesting, Mr. Speaker, that I, in response to this telex, as did all Ministers of Education from across the country, we convened a meeting of the Council of Ministers of Education of Canada, a responsible authority in education in Canada. The Ministers of Education, we, wanted to take a look as to what this really meant. So, we met in Toronto last week, and as a consequence I missed two days of this House. We met and we discussed and

we came to a conclusion that we thought as a group we had a pretty good idea as to what

that meant. We opened our meeting on a Tuesday night last week, we met for three or four

hours, three hours I guess on Tuesday night, we resumed at 9 :00 a.m. on Wednesday and the

Honourable Doug MacArthur who is the Minister of Education in Saskatchewan and who is

chairman of the Council of Ministers, he was chairing our Wednesday morning session. About an hour into the session he said "Ladies and Gentlemen, I have just gotten word that

there is a telex on the way to this meeting from the honourable Secretary of State." Sure

enough, approximately a half hour later the telex arrives. The telex, and I will not read it all

but will table a copy, the telex says such things in it as "my letter," and we have later had it

clarified that that was reference to telex, "should be read as applying only to post secondary

education arrangements. It is not to be linked with provincial endorsement of other aspects

of federal-provincial fiscal arrangements." That is the telex which came following receipt of

in return for full provincial endorsement of the federal offer with respect to other aspects of

the MacEachen Budget and so on.

Mr. Speaker, I am very concerned, and I will close with this, I promise, but there

is an attitude current, very, very, evident in the minds of those who make the rules in Ottawa and that is that they will back away to the maximum extent possible from cost

shared cost programs and participating with financial assistance to this province and to all

provinces.

It is clear, too, I believe, and this is the major threat, that there is an attitude of those

who are casting their lustful eye on post secondary education institutions across this country, those who again participate in policy making decisions in Ottawa, that they want

to control those institutions. I say that the autonomy of the Nova Scotia post secondary education institution is an attitude which this government values. It is a situation which this

government values and I doubt that there is an honourable member opposite who was part

of a previous government, who would want us to interfere and tamper with that institution

al autonomy unduly.

But I have reason to believe, Mr. Speaker, that it is the attitude of those in Ottawa who

make policy in regard to the sharing of the costs to support those institutions that by way

of direct funding and other methods, they are going to start to dictate to institutions, post

secondary institutions what they may and may not do. I am not at all averse to having some

input in that and having government have an opportunity to discuss those matters with

those who run the post secondary education institutions, Mr. Speaker, but I believe the

federal attitude and posture goes much further than that.

Mr. Speaker, I did have some serious concern when I rose as to whether or not it

would be possible for me to take my time. I am relieved that it has been possible for me to take the time. My House Leader indicated that that was his wish and you and all members

know, Mr. Speaker, that all of us here are very anxious to do the bidding of the honourable

House Leader and so I am pleased that I was able.

I appreciate this opportunity to participate in this Throne Speech debate, Mr. Speaker.

I have no doubt that in Question Period and in debate on legislation which I will introduce later in this House and which has been referred, other legislation which other ministers will introduce relating to condominiums and other things to which I have referred, I will have

another opportunity to participate on those occasions and I take great pleasure in indicating

to the House that I heartily support the Speech from the Throne and the motion in support of the Speech from the Throne.