

INTRODUCTION

Recently announced changes to a program intended to encourage aboriginal people¹ to pursue post-secondary education studies have been the object of much concern and protest in the aboriginal community. The program is clearly one of great importance to aboriginal people, particularly treaty people, and is valued as a means of realizing their individual and collective goals.

This report will begin with an overview of events leading to the Minister's announcement in March of 1989 of the new policy governing the operation of the program, which is now entitled "Post-Secondary Student Assistance Program". This overview (Chapter 1) will be followed by: a summary of the changes made to the post-secondary education assistance program under the 1989 policy (Chapter 2); a summary of the evidence received by the Committee on this issue (Chapter 3); a review of the 1988 Report of the Auditor-General as it is relevant to the post-secondary education assistance program (Chapter 4); a review of the report of the Assembly of First Nations on First Nations education in terms of post-secondary education issues (Chapter 5); the recommendations of the Committee on this issue (Chapter 6).

TERMINOLOGY

In order to understand the scope of activities covered by the Department's program, it is necessary to have some understanding of the term "post-secondary education" and the distinctions made between this level of study and vocational and skilled trades training. It should be noted that provincial definitions of post-secondary education vary widely. For the purposes of Statistics Canada's classification system, post-secondary education programs are defined as meeting the following criteria:

- the normal entrance requirement is high school completion;
- the program is one year or more in duration;
- the program leads to a certificate, diploma or degree; and
- the program is not classified as trade/vocational.²

Post-secondary education programs have been described as preparing students for occupations beyond the skilled trades/vocational level and as including university programs, college programs delivered at a post-secondary