

Good news in federal budget package for Nova Scotia universities

by Gregory Hamara

In the wake of last week's federal budget, Nova Scotia education officials and university administrators are breathing a bit easier, secure in the knowledge that federal cutbacks in post-secondary financing will not be as draconian as they had earlier anticipated.

But at the same time, their optimism is tempered by Ottawa's announced intention of linking future education subsidies to post-secondary programs which will complement the federal government's national economic objectives.

Calculating that Nova Scotia stands to lose about two million

dollars in Established Program Financing (EPF) payments in fiscal year 1982-83 -- a loss escalating to over \$27 million by 1986-87 -- Dr. Peter Butler, special policy advisor to Minister of Education Terrence Donahoe, said that "the cutbacks were not as drastic as we had expected -- so I guess we can be a bit thankful."

Butler added that the federal government's decision to slowly turn down the tap on future EPF funds was not restricted solely to education, and that provincial health and social service programs would also be affected.

"It will now be up to the (provincial) minister of finance to

decide where the cutbacks will be implemented. I fully expect that he will be consulting officials from all three departments before making his decision," Butler said.

Due to illness, Donahoe was unavailable for comment on the budget proposals.

Dalhousie president, Dr. Andrew MacKay, echoed Butler's sentiments, and said that, based on preliminary indications, there did not appear to be a "major threat" to the financing of post-secondary education.

According to the proposals tabled in the House of Commons by Finance Minister Allan MacEachen, the federal

government, starting in April 1982, wants EPF payments to the provinces to be "equalized on a per capita basis," with each province receiving the same amount of funding per resident. The move means a federal reduction in that area of \$97 million in 1982-83, and total savings to the government of \$374 million over the next five years.

The program of compensating the provinces for tax money they lose under the federal taxation system will be ended next April. Introduced in 1972 by former finance minister John Turner, this "revenue guarantee compensation" plan has paid out over \$5.5 billion to the pro-

vinces, and in the coming five years its axing will amount to \$5.3 billion saved by Ottawa.

In total, the EPF adjustments and ending of tax compensation payments will mean that \$5.7 billion will be chopped from existing transfer payments over the next half decade.

The budget outlines federal tax changes that will, the minister said, allow provincial revenues to climb by \$3.7 billion in the next five year period -- producing a "net impact" of \$1.9 billion in reduced money available to provinces after the switches.

The budget included the announcement that the government wants federal-provincial arrangements for the financing of post-secondary education and "human resources development" to be renegotiated by March 1983, effectively extending the EPF plan an extra year while beginning new talks with provincial finance ministers. If no EPF deal can be struck by the 1983 deadline, the federal government could "freeze future per capita EPF cash transfers for post-secondary education at the 1982-83 level," according to the proposed budget.

It is on this issue of future federal allotments and "human resource development" (read: national economic objectives) that both MacKay and Butler expressed a sense of foreboding.

"It is not very clear, at this point, in what manner Ottawa expects the provinces to spend their future education funds," said MacKay. He cited as an example a university administrators meeting he was scheduled to attend in Ottawa Wednesday, with, for the first time, federal officials from two different departments.

"In the past, we have normally met with people from the secretary of state for federal-provincial relations," he said. "At Wednesday's meeting we will be sitting down with officials from manpower as well."

MacKay suggested that this new format could become the norm for future negotiations with the central government.

Butler, who also serves as chairman of a special committee advising Donahoe on EPF matters, was similarly leery of perceived federal tampering on the future direction of post-secondary education.

He said that those provinces who willingly comply with Ottawa's desires to meld education with its economic goals will benefit by increased funding; conversely, those which don't follow the path carved out by Ottawa will suffer.

"What the government essentially is doing is dictating what the future priorities of education should be," he added.

Butler said that the position being staked out by the Nova Scotia government is one in which the province is willing to be "cooperative -- as long as the federal government's plans do

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Over schedule, over budget: announcing The President's House

by Pat Martin

With bags packed and boxes filled, Dalhousie President Andrew MacKay and his wife have begun the process of moving into the newly restored Presidential residence at 1640 Oxford Street. It was hoped they could have been established in their new home by now, but like about everything else these days the project went over schedule and over budget.

In April, the Board of Governors allocated \$180,000 for renovations from a Capital Expenditure payment of \$1 million through the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission.

Attempts to find the price tag on the house proved to be futile. Both the Director of Planning and Development at Dalhousie, Jim Sykes, and the President's office, were either unwilling or unable to provide even a ball park figure. Cost figures will be released at the coming Board of Governors meeting within the next two weeks.

Built in the 1800's by Levi Hart, a West Indian merchant, the house has a varied history. In 1925 the house was purchased for the university with monies donated by R.B. Bennet, a former law student who went on to become Canadian Prime Minister for the years 1930-35. Intended by Bennet to be a 'prestige residence' for university presidents, it served that purpose well until 1963. President at that time, Dr. Henry Hicks, remained in his own home around the corner on Coburg Road. The stately home was then converted to office space which has over the years been used by the Psychology and Education departments.



Childerhose/Dal Photo

When President MacKay came into his office last year, it was decided to restore the house as the official presidential residence.

Completion of the Dalplex enabled the Physical Education department to move from the Arts Annex to the new sports facility. This caused a chain reaction which saw Education move into the Arts Annex (now the Education building) from its two locations in the presidential house and in the war buildings across the street on the corner of Coburg and Oxford. The School of Social Work moved into the war buildings and the temporary buildings which had housed them were torn down,

providing a backyard for the home. (Very simple, right?)

The house required 'extensive renovations' according to Sykes. The aim was to restore the house to its original condition and quality. Repairs were to be made where possible, and what could not be fixed was replaced. Electrical and plumbing systems were replaced, all of the fire places were put back into working order, the hardwood floors were sanded and refinished, a new basement floor was required and supporting columns were reinforced (one of the many Unforseen expenses). There were new fixtures, plaster, paper, carpet, tiles and probably a partridge in a pear tree.

Highlights included a large spiraling staircase climbing three stories. There are fireplaces in almost every room in the house. The modern kitchen features one of those refrigerators which dispenses ice cubes and ice water or other liquids. If one takes the staircase to the second floor one finds the main 'salle de bain' (classy French word for bathroom) containing a real Jacuzzi.

Quality restoration has produced a stately and well appointed home which will provide President MacKay with a comfortable and practical residence from which meetings, entertainment and other presidential functions may be carried out.