

program offered by Laval University. I would now like to quote a letter written by Mr. Ferland to the Solicitor General:

His explanation is far from satisfactory; as for his suggestion to continue university programs in penitentiaries, this could only have an adverse effect on the development of education in the prison environment.

That is clear, Mr. Speaker.

[English]

I think it is most unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, that the Solicitor General (Mr. Kaplan) has apparently refused to listen to the universal advice he received from the Canadian education community, including the Canadian Association for Adult Education, the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, the Canadian Association of University Teachers, the Canadian Teachers' Federation, the National Union of Students, the National Associations Active in Criminal Justice, the Church Council on Justice and Corrections, the John Howard Society, and the Canadian Labour Congress, along with a host of individuals right across the country including Members of Parliament on all sides of the House.

These representations were to the effect that, first of all, specialized university programs developed in Canada in several penitentiaries should be continued. They should not be weakened by off-the-shelf courses, for example, or by distance education or correspondence courses. Their budgets should not be reduced.

Most importantly, the idea which the Minister is now proposing of fees for students will in effect kill post-secondary education programs not only in the Atlantic Provinces and Quebec, at Queen's University in Ontario, and Manitoba where the Minister refused to fund such programs, but it will also kill the very successful program in British Columbia which is being operated by the University of Victoria.

The Minister has suggested that there are not enough students involved in the program in Quebec, but I note that the programs in Quebec and Ontario, unlike the very successful program in British Columbia which I strongly support, are very new programs. There has never been a university program in the Atlantic region. Apparently there has not been much interest on the part of the CSC to begin such a program in that region even though St. Francis Xavier University expressed a willingness to consider the possibility a number of years ago. But in the case of the new programs in Quebec and Ontario, there has not been enough time to develop larger enrolments. I would suspect much larger enrolments could be developed, particularly if the programs were offered in penitentiaries closer to the university itself. Laval institution and Laval University are several hundred miles apart. I am quite confident that that is one of the reasons for the low initial enrolment in that program. But, to use that as an excuse for killing the program entirely is, in my view, a very serious mistake.

I would note as well, Mr. Speaker, that this particular program has been strongly supported by educators. In the Province of Quebec a petition has been signed by some 200 professors calling upon the Government to reconsider its decision and effectively keep this rehabilitative program. There are

not many programs in the federal penitentiary system which seem to work in terms of rehabilitation. To kill a program in Quebec, Ontario and Manitoba which is getting under way and, admittedly, still does not have a large enrolment, and as a result will have a higher per student cost, is a tragic mistake in my view.

● (1815)

Laval University has just been the recipient of a grant from the Donner Foundation to implement a research and study program on post-secondary education in Canada. This is a recognition of the outstanding job done by Mr. Ferland and that university.

I hope the Minister will consider the conclusions of a study done this summer which showed that if inmates are required to make a significant financial contribution to the cost of their university education, the result will be a substantial decrease in first year enrolments and the eventual disappearance of this important rehabilitation program in its present form.

In view of those conclusions, and in view of the clear success of this program as acknowledged by the Minister as recently as last month in a letter to Mr. Ferland, I hope he will reconsider his decision and reinstate this very worth-while program, not only in the Province of Quebec but in Queen's University in Ontario and in Manitoba and, indeed, expand the existing program in the Province of British Columbia.

It is also essential that the Minister's proposal for contributions by students not be implemented as it would result in the death of the program across Canada. The program has been very successful both in terms of rehabilitation and the recognition it has received from many different groups involved in adult education.

[Translation]

**Mr. Alain Tardif (Parliamentary Secretary to Solicitor General):** Mr. Speaker, during oral question period on October 14 of this year, the Member for Burnaby (Mr. Robinson) asked the Solicitor General why he had decided to terminate the education program offered by Laval University at the Laval Institution. As he said himself in his reply to the Hon. Member the same day, the Minister strongly supports providing post-secondary education in federal prison institutions. However, the BAGIL program, set up at the Laval Institution and offered to inmates under federal jurisdiction in the Quebec region who were eligible for university level education, was somewhat limited throughout the three years of its existence. In fact, only 12 student inmates were enrolled at the time the program was suspended. The fact that the program attracted so few students made it very expensive to run, the cost being about \$8,000 per student inmate per year. I may add that the low rate of enrolment in programs at Queen's University and the University of Manitoba was one of the factors leading to the suspension of these programs as well. However, the program at the University of Victoria has been expanded, since it has the highest enrolment: 140 full-time and 32 part-time