

Solicitor General denies pre-judging APEC inquiry

BY ALEX BUSTOS

OTTAWA (CUP) — Federal opposition parties demanded the resignation of Solicitor General Andy Scott Tuesday for allegedly prejudging an RCMP inquiry investigating police actions at last year's Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation conference.

The demands came a day after Dick Proctor, an NDP member of parliament, said he overheard a conversation between Scott and another passenger aboard an Air Canada flight to Fredericton on Oct. 1.

Proctor, who was sitting two seats away in the same row as Scott, took notes as he listened in on the conversation.

"[Scott] talked very openly about the APEC inquiry and he said that as far as he was concerned it would come out that there was excessive force used by four or five Mounties," Proctor said Monday.

"[Scott also] said, 'I'm the cover. I wanted to go to the World Series in New York next week but I can't because I'm the cover.'"

When asked to interpret the meaning of the word "cover", Proctor said it meant Scott was protecting the prime minister from the RCMP public complaints commission.

Dozens of students were pepper sprayed, arrested without charge and had their protest banners confiscated during the APEC conference last November.

The alleged discussion on the plane, the opposition charged, was proof Scott had prejudged the commission's results.

Scott has said publicly that people looking for answers about the treatment of protesters at the summit should wait and see what the inquiry concludes.

When asked to respond to the allegations on Monday, Scott told the House of Commons he couldn't recall who he spoke to on the flight, or if they discussed the APEC affair.

Outside the House, Scott said Monday he would consider quitting if Proctor's story was confirmed, the Globe and Mail reported.

But on Tuesday, Scott told the House he recalled talking to lawyer and Liberal Party supporter Frederick Toole on the

Fredericton-bound flight.

He said he discussed APEC with Toole but didn't engage in "an inappropriate conversation that in any way would prejudice the outcome of the (public complaints commission) inquiry."

The opposition wasted no time in rejecting Scott's assurances.

"How is it that the solicitor general could not recall any of the conversation yesterday, but today has total recall of that same

conversation?" asked Reform Leader Preston Manning.

Moments later, Reform member of parliament Deborah Gray demanded that Scott step down.

"Great Scott, we have gone from 'I can't recall' to total recall, now to a rebuttal. When will we go to the resignation?" Gray asked.

The other opposition parties joined Reform's call for Scott's resignation.

"In light of this controversy, will the solicitor general now show some integrity, take responsibility for his actions and resign immediately?" asked Progressive Conservative House leader Peter MacKay.

Scott refused the calls to step down.

"As I said this morning, I said nothing that would interfere with the process of the [hearings] or with the outcome," he said.

University of Victoria compromises on "corporate classrooms"

MARY VALLIS AND
MIGUEL MACDONALD

VICTORIA (CUP) — Classrooms in the University of Victoria's Centre for Innovative Teaching, slated to open in January, are still nameless thanks to pressure from students who oppose naming the rooms after corporate donors to the project.

University President David Strong agreed to take the proposed corporate room names back to the drawing board following a board of governors meeting last week when student representatives Sandra Guarascio and Ritu Mahil voiced their opposition to the plan.

The proposed names for the rooms include the BC Tel-Royal Bank of Canada lecture theatre, a Fletcher Challenge Canada seminar room, and a BC Sugar Imasco Limited reception room.

The university's recently revised recognition policy says that a minimum \$125,000 donation warrants a named classroom for the donor.

"It would be insulting to walk into a room recognizing the Royal Bank of Canada when we're going to be indebted to this institution for 20 years," Guarascio told last

week's meeting.

Board members directed Strong to explore naming the rooms after an individual within each organization instead of its corporate entity. If the corporations agree to the change, each donating organization will still be recognized on the centre's donor wall.

The decision to reconsider the plan was met with resounding applause from students who packed the gallery.

The issue has highlighted how private donations are becoming increasingly important to the university. Private sector contributions represent 60 percent of the building's \$3.7-million fund while the provincial government kicked in \$1.13 million when the project first got underway.

And with \$6.3 billion in cuts to provinces since 1993, in addition to a tuition freeze, the BC government has its hands tied when it comes to new expenditures.

In other provinces, cash-strapped universities have already turned to naming classrooms and buildings after donors. At the University of Toronto, for example, one professor is sponsored by the Royal Bank and

students study in the Xerox library. At the University of Calgary, students have courses in the Husky Oil classroom and charge their books in a library with a Petro-Canada logo on its doors.

But critics warn that naming classrooms after corporate donors and other similar tactics are a threat to the university's academic integrity.

Richard Tones, a member of the students' society at the University of Victoria, opposed the proposed corporate classrooms at the Centre for Innovative Teaching because the donors in question have enjoyed large tax breaks.

According to the Globe and Mail's Report on Business database, the amount of deferred taxes saved by Canadian Pacific — one of the donors — was well over \$1.3 billion.

"There is enough money there to re-establish the funding we've lost for the next five years," said Tones.

Guarascio agrees.

"(It's) appalling that we are recognizing corporations that have cheated us out of the taxes that they owe, let alone the taxes that people feel they should be paying. That's money that's not coming back to the

provinces."

Dr. Alexander Briggs, who also opposed the proposal, says naming classrooms may eventually lead to corporate-sponsored classes and teachers.

"I view the naming of academic buildings and classrooms after corporations as another [slide] on the slippery slope toward loss of academic freedom," Briggs wrote in a recent letter to the university's Board of Governors.

But Strong says corporate donations to the university needn't raise alarm bells.

"Corporations will never, in my mind, be big enough to significantly drive the direction of the university," he said.

And while students like Guarascio hope Strong's decision to reconsider the classroom proposal may lead to a general review of corporate donations in general, Strong places less emphasis on his concession.

"All we did was accept a motion that I go back and try again," he said.

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