

- Major universities have never been provincial in scope, despite what the Fathers of Confederation may have thought. Universities such as Harvard, Paris, London or Stanford could never have achieved their present world stature and influence if they had been seen as creatures of a particular city, province or state.⁹

Many witnesses argued that because post-secondary education plays a role in attaining national goals, and because the federal government already supports areas of post-secondary education through widespread general and specific programs, closer co-operation and co-ordination among all those involved is required, that is between the two orders of government and the post-secondary community.

Several university, faculty and student associations expressed grave concern about the absence of a co-ordinated national approach and called for a public enquiry or royal commission on the role, objectives and financing of post-secondary education in Canada. They also noted the failure to effect the 1976 First Ministers' commitment to the establishment of an effective intergovernmental forum for discussion of higher education issues of concern to both orders of government.

One witness proposed that in the absence of provincial willingness to involve the federal government in matters of higher education policy, the federal government should withdraw its general (EPF) support over a three-year period and devote these resources to areas of more direct federal responsibility.¹⁰

Finally, as regards mechanisms, a number of witnesses and briefs stressed the importance of better co-ordination *within* the federal government respecting its direct or indirect involvement in matters affecting post-secondary education.

In general, it was argued that post-secondary education is seriously underfunded in most parts of Canada, and that the abandonment of the shared-cost approach in favour of block-funding of federal general support for advanced education, beginning in 1977-78, had contributed to this situation. Indeed, some submissions contended that since EPF was introduced, provincial post-secondary support has grown at a slower rate than federal transfers for this purpose. It was also noted that in

almost all provinces, the total of the EPF allocated to the post-secondary transfer, including the value of the related tax transfer, now exceeds provincial support of the post-secondary sector. (For reasons that have already been set out in Chapter III, however, the Task Force considers some of these perceptions to be based, to some extent, on a misinterpretation of the structure and intent of the EPF arrangements.)

Although there was little or no criticism of the size of current federal support, underfunding of the sector itself was still cited as the major issue, and apprehension was expressed about the consequences of any reduction in federal assistance to provinces for post-secondary education. If provinces were to pass on such reductions, grave consequences could ensue for the institutions, for their students and, in the longer run, for the country as a whole. In particular, the capacity of the system to serve the country's goals respecting highly-qualified manpower, scientific research and development, and economic growth and international competitiveness could be seriously impaired. The major problem was said to be the long-term nature of the professional and institutional commitment in scholarship, in academic programs and in capital facilities for such programs. Consequently, drastic reductions in funding intended to induce change could not be absorbed in a few years.

Concerns were also expressed about the impact that further provincial restraint could have on equality of access and mobility for students throughout the country, in the absence of enriched programs of aid for needy students. Another equity argument made by representative groups from a number of regions was the need for special funding in the Atlantic area. This was to ensure comparable post-secondary education and research capability and hence more equality in educational opportunities in that region in comparison with the rest of Canada. Similar points were made about the obligation of the country to provide increased higher education opportunities for women and such other groups as Native peoples and official language minorities. For the latter, ensuring the development and maintenance of minority language institutions was said to be very important.

Although witnesses urged that present levels of federal financial assistance for higher education be maintained and indeed, some argued that it should