

Ex-Premier says universities must change

BY SEAN RYAN

ST. JOHN'S (CUP) — Universities in Canada must become more adaptable to private sector demands or they risk becoming irrelevant, says former New Brunswick premier Frank McKenna.

"At the risk of being overly provocative, universities are either going to have to change and catch up or they're going to be irrelevant to what's going on in the world and they're going to perish," he said.

McKenna made the remarks during the seventh annual week-long conference of the Canadian Institutional Research and Planning Association, which ended this past Friday in St. John's.

McKenna says evidence of the need for change at the post-secondary level can be found in the World Index of Competitiveness report.

The index gave Canada a rating of sixth in literacy and education, down from second place last year.

"We have not been keeping up our productivity," he said. "The results are that, as Canadians, we're poorer than we were ten years ago."

"Other countries are passing us by," he added. "This is at a time when there are literally hundreds of

thousands of jobs available to us from all around the world."

McKenna says a major part of this problem, as well as a potential contributor to the solution, are universities and other post-secondary institutions.

"We should be stepping in and providing some of these skills," he said. "It doesn't mean that we have to walk away from our traditional role of educating the entire person — we can do all of those things. But we have to recognize that there are huge employment opportunities out there, if we provide the right tools to our graduates."

McKenna also says that too many university students are having to go to community colleges after graduation in order to find work. He added that private institutions are moving deeper into the post-secondary education market, particularly those which are online.

"I think the universities can continue to be a place for thinkers, a people who challenge the conventional wisdom of ideas and dreamers even, all of those things," he said. "But it's not unreasonable as well to have an eye on the market and prepare people with some life skills, or at least stream them in that direction."

University governance has

become particularly binding for institutions, he says, which has deprived them of their ability to change and adapt as necessary.

"Today, I see the university to be so bound in structure and process that they're always chasing everybody else who are leading change, trying to catch up, instead of being out front and making things happen," he said.

He also says communication between institutions, particularly between universities and colleges, needs to be improved.

"There seems to be this extraordinary lack of goodwill or lack of flexibility to allow credits to be given for certain educational programs that have been taken."

McKenna added that, while increased government funding would be beneficial in some ways, it would not solve all of these problems.

"I think governments have a responsibility to enrich the funding available, but they also have an obligation to the taxpayers to make sure that those people responsible are spending the money wisely and efficiently," he said. "And right now, I don't think that there is that comfort out there on the part of governments."

APEC inquiry chair denies charges of bias

BY DOUGLAS QUAN

VANCOUVER (CUP) — The chair of the APEC inquiry in Vancouver staunchly denied Friday allegations that he prejudged the outcome of the hearings.

Nevertheless, panel Chair Gerald Morin adjourned the hearings for three weeks to allow the Federal Court to investigate the matter.

Reading from a prepared statement at the start of the hearings on Friday, Morin denied any wrong doing.

"I can say for the record, I unequivocally deny the allegations. I have not done anything wrong. I have not prejudged these matters. I will judge only after all the evidence is in," he said.

Morin added he was confident he could continue to act as chair.

The allegations against Morin arose on Thursday morning when government lawyer Ivan Whitehall presented the statement of RCMP Cst. Russell Black of

Prince Albert, Sask. to the public complaints commission.

Cst. Black claims he overheard Morin in a casino last Spring say police mishandled protesters with pepper spray at last November's APEC conference and that he knew the outcome of the inquiry.

In light of the new allegations, RCMP lawyer George MacIntosh said he would ask the Federal Court to quash the hearings.

But the complainants and their lawyers charged the federal government and the RCMP were involved in a whitewash, and questioned the timing of the allegations.

"I'm concerned [Ivan] Whitehall has approached the panel privately... clearly with the intention of pulling the plug on the hearings," said Cameron Ward, lawyer for over a dozen student complainants.

"I suspect the government is feeling the heat, feeling nervous about how close we're getting to the truth."

The inquiry is set to resume on Nov. 16.

Paint bombs!

BY JEN QUESNEL

REGINA (CUP) — Red blotches of paint marked the new University of Regina president's inauguration ceremony last week after 10 red paint bombs were thrown at his house.

University President David Barnard has been targeted recently by campus activists upset by the rise in tuition fees.

The paint-bomb incident came on the heels of the university's "Free Education" festival sponsored by local student activists.

"I think the administration would have found [the slogans] offensive and that was the point," said Colin Hall, an executive member of the University of Regina Student's Union. "I think we gave people some facts of what Barnard's been up to and obviously that touched a nerve with somebody."

No charges have been laid yet, but campus security manager

Pat Patton said the matter is under investigation.

"If we are able to determine the perpetrator, we would prosecute to the full extent," said Patton. "We do have evidence... [and] the police have been notified."

The red spots were removed by sandblasting crews by 6pm the next day. Repairs to the house are estimated at \$3000.

The paint splattered windows, shingles, siding and the white granite face of the house. A vehicle in the driveway was also damaged.

"From the university point of view, there's a point where things... become intolerable," said James Tompkins, the acting vice-president of administration.

The president would not comment directly on the paint bombing, but called student pamphlets accusing him of forcing a tuition fee increase "misleading and untrue".

"[The tuition increase] is not a personal decision by me," Barnard said. "The Board did what it thought it had to do."

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