

There is no doubt that PSEAP has made a significant contribution toward improving employment opportunities for Indian people and increasing their participation in the economic growth of their communities.

The Minister maintains, however, that the policy under the E-12 Guidelines did not place enough emphasis on encouraging aboriginal students to complete their post-secondary studies and that the program budget cannot continue to operate without a fixed annual limit.

The Minister has also stated that the policy change was made in response to aboriginal criticisms of the E-12 Guidelines and that the new policy takes into account many of the concerns raised during the six-month consultation period. To deal with outstanding issues, the Minister has indicated that the government is willing to engage in a number of bilateral processes. The Minister rejected the concept of a moratorium on policy change for a number of reasons.

The consultation process and reports from the aboriginal community on the E-12 Guidelines indicate a consensus on a need for revision of the Guidelines. On the other hand, without exception, submissions made to the Committee indicate great dissatisfaction with many of the key program changes announced by the Minister in March of 1989.

A major concern of practically all witnesses was a lack of adequate consultation with the aboriginal community on the program changes before they were announced in March. The majority of witnesses called for a moratorium on any program changes pending the completion of an acceptable consultation process. In the interim, most witnesses insisted that the program should continue to operate under the E-12 Guidelines.

Practically all of the submissions from aboriginal people emphasized the importance they placed on viewing post-secondary education as an aboriginal or treaty right and on the need to find a mechanism to deal with treaty right disputes such as this one. The government has on several occasions stated its position that post-secondary education is not a treaty right.

Aboriginal witnesses were especially concerned that all interested and eligible students receive funding under the program without deferral. This was the basis of their concern that the post-secondary education program budget not be "capped". There were a number of other specific concerns with the policy announced in March of 1989.