

Release of APEC inquiry's report not a sure thing, new solicitor general says

By ALEX BUSTOS

OTTAWA (CUP) -- Canadians may never get a chance to read the final report of the APEC inquiry, the newly appointed solicitor general said Tuesday.

"The report is given to me, and then I will decide whether it will become public or not," said Lawrence MacAulay, barely 24 hours after being assigned to the post left vacant by Andy Scott, who resigned Monday under the heat of allegations he prejudged the APEC investigation.

"What I want to happen is to have the (RCMP) Public Complaints Commission do their job and submit their report to me, and then I'll deal with (the report)," MacAulay said outside the House of Commons.

MacAulay's remarks caught some members of parliament off guard.

"When you call something the public complaints commission it's a little hard to think it wouldn't be made public," said New Democratic Party MP Dick Proctor outside the House. "It's hard to imagine why the new solicitor general would say that."

Others said MacAulay's statement highlighted the need for an independent judicial inquiry to replace the RCMP Public Complaints Commission hearings, which are looking into whether officers used excessive force against protesters at last year's Asia Pacific summit in Vancouver.

"When the public complaints commission does report, it goes to the commissioner of the RCMP and the solicitor general," Conservative Party MP Peter MacKay said.

"What they do chose to do with it is completely done behind closed doors.

They're not under any obligation to make it public. They're not under any obligation to even act on what the commission reports," he said.

MacKay also said an independent investigation is needed because the current inquiry has no mandate to investigate the government.

For months, opposition parties and students have accused the Prime Minister's Office of ordering the Mounties to quell APEC student protesters at the meeting of 18 Pacific Rim leaders.

"As has been pointed out time and time again this commission is not the proper forum to look at political interference," said MacKay.

"And political interference is what is at very base of these questions (over APEC)."

The Prime Minister, however, told the House Tuesday he would co-operate with the APEC inquiry if asked.

Newfoundland students won't have voice on premier's council

By SEAN RYAN

ST. JOHN'S (CUP) -- Newfoundland Premier Brian Tobin has decided against appointing a student to the province's consultative panel on social development, he revealed last week.

"I think at this time there is no (such) intention," he said of the idea to appoint a student leader to the Premier's Council on Social Development.

"The purpose of the advisory council is not to try and have every organization represented... but rather to have a group that represents a good cross-section of community."

Tobin said the officials who currently sit on the council, including Human Resources and Employment Minister Julie Bettney, provide that cross section.

"The kind of people who are on (the council) are very independent, certainly they are not partisan," he said, adding that if he tried to ensure every societal group was represented on the influential body it would become too large and unwieldy.

The advisory council was established as part of the government's "Strategic Social Plan for Newfoundland and Labrador," an initiative unveiled last August.

As the minister who oversees that plan, Bettney says the 20-person advisory council is meant to help the province maintain close links with the public as it forms social policy -- which will likely include post-secondary education and other issues affecting youth.

"What we wanted to do was put together a group of people who represented the best thinking on social

development that we could use as a sounding board... as we move through this process now of implementing a strategic social plan," she said.

The experts chosen to sit on the council, she said, are not there to represent specific constituencies but will seek input from particular sectors of the population when necessary.

But student leaders, who have been pushing for representation on the seat for some time, criticized the decision not to appoint a student representative to the council.

They say a student seat is necessary on any council mandated to deal with social planning.

"How can you create a strategic social plan without considering education?" asked Tracey O'Reilly, president of the student union at Memorial University.

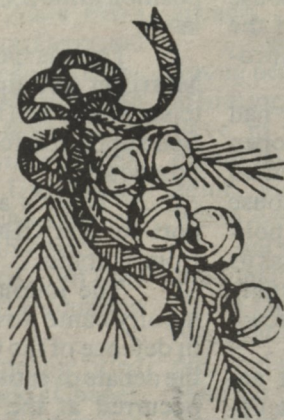
"We spend our days dealing with education policy, with student aid, with government and I would humbly suggest that we are the experts in this," O'Reilly added.

"So why wouldn't we be on a committee that creates social policy? I really don't know; there is no logical reason."

Dale Kirby, president of the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Students, also said he was disappointed by the decision.

He added the council should be constituency-based if it is to truly contribute to effective policy making.

"The more I hear about this council, the more I'm skeptical about the mandate and its ability to do anything other than rubberstamp what government or what cabinet is coming up with," Kirby said.



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