

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

In these times, the tasks before any major public commission are likely to call for significant administrative support; in the case of the present Commission, these requirements were truly daunting. In view of this, it was an extremely happy circumstance that Mr. Earl Backman agreed to accept appointment as the Commission's Executive Director. Seconded from his position as City Manager of Brandon, Manitoba and with prior administrative experience at the Public Schools' Finance Board, he brought to the Commission invaluable knowledge, wise counsel, and a strong belief in the value of education; these he combined with boundless energy and a fine sense of humour.

Ms. Joan Moore served ably and tirelessly as the Commission's administrative officer and research analyst. Her seemingly effortless efficiency helped ensure that Commission members found their way to their numerous public hearings, duly equipped with agendas, briefing notes and the other requirements necessary for informed and inquiring discussions with those making presentations and with other members of the public. Her knowledge of cartography and her determination to acquire the fullest possible information on pertinent educational developments elsewhere in Canada served the Commission extremely well.

The third member of the Commission's staff, Mrs. Louise Gauthier, also rendered splendid services. A recent graduate of the Faculty of Education at the "Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface", she brought to the Commission's labours a full range of modern skills in computers and their associated mysteries, whilst possessing the ability, courteously and graciously, to provide answers - in both official languages as needed - to the hundreds of enquiries that were directed to the Commission's office. Fortunate will be those students who come to know her in her future role in the teaching profession.

We are deeply indebted to all three of these able and conscientious persons: without them the work of the Commission would have been impossible.

The Commission has also been singularly fortunate in receiving the most extensive cooperation possible from a great number of educational organizations and knowledgeable individuals. We are particularly grateful for the assistance of the Manitoba Teachers' Society and the Manitoba Association of School Trustees: both willingly shared with the Commission, publicly and

privately, their valuable insight and experience. They also shared with us important research data assembled over many years of serving the students and public of Manitoba.

The Manitoba Association of School Business Officials, The Manitoba Association of School Superintendents, officials of the Department of Education and Training and the Schools' Finance Branch, together with the Assessment Branch of the Department of Rural Development and the Land Information Centre of the Department of Natural Resources were most supportive. All were available when called upon and provided helpful commentary and data which was illuminating and important to the work of the Commission.

Presentations were received from local school boards and local teachers' associations, the Home and School Parent-Teacher Federation of Manitoba Inc. and from the "Fédération provinciale des comités de parents inc". These were most helpful since they, along with numerous local parent-teacher councils, focused the Commission's deliberations on the fundamental component of our education system - the interaction between supportive parents and dedicated classroom teachers.

Business and labour organizations and municipal governments all reminded the Commission of the importance, to society as a whole, of a strong and effective school system extending well beyond the classroom: thereby, they reminded us that education requires ongoing involvement and financial support from all segments of society. We found these submissions refreshing, insightful, and positive.

The Commission visited schools throughout the Province. These visits, whether on a Hutterite Colony, in a small rural town, in the North, or to a large urban high school or a special needs centre, were amongst the most memorable and rewarding hours spent by the Commission members. It was there, in the faces, attitudes and strivings of the young people we met and talked with, that our tasks ceased to be abstract and became real, alive and immediate. It was there that we were reinforced in our view that the most important and influential person in the education system is the classroom teacher. As society has changed and there is often diminished support from home, government and the community in general, the task of the teacher has become increasingly difficult and challenging. This social reality means that understanding and supportive policies are even more necessary than in the past. We were impressed by and grateful for the dedication exhibited on many occasions, and in so many ways, by those into whose hands we place the future of our province.