

## **Where's Commitment of Public Universities?**

I have been reading with interest the series of articles concerning the grant by the provincial government of \$2.8 Million to the Atlantic Baptist University. Approximately 7 months ago, I wrote a letter to the editor concerning the fact that degree-granting status was conferred on Lansbridge University. I argued that this was a quick-fix solution for the government, in that allowing private universities to set up in New Brunswick meant the government would not have to increase the allotment of funds to the public universities because the private institutions (whose funds come from private sources and tuition fees) could take some of the pressure off the public institutions. However, I also warned that these institutions would come looking for money from the government when they fell on hard times, and that the government should take heed and support the public institutions now. It is a case, of paying the public institutions adequately now or, by having to bail out private institutions, paying later. Alas, the latter has just taken place.

Recently, the provincial government offered their public institutions a one-time sum of \$15 Million for infrastructure improvements. Of this money, St. Thomas University, for example, is slated to receive only about \$550,000. St. Thomas has approximately 2,500 students and 80 full-time professors, and its physical plant is running at near maximum capacity. On the other hand: Atlantic Baptist University, a private institution, has approximately 500 students and 23 full-time professors. It moved into a new campus in the early 1990s and is receiving a grant of \$2.8 Million. What message does this send to the public of New Brunswick about the provincial government's commitment to our public universities?

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