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**British Columbia: Education’s Speech, first session of the twenty-ninth legislature, 11 Février 1970.**

Mr. Speaker, as I take my place in this debate today, I want to first of all express my appreciation to the constituents of my area who have supported me for the fifth time in electing me as their representative for the Rossland-Trail riding.

During these years much has been accomplished in our area, and just last year alone, for example, we had the opportunity of opening a new Senior Citizens' Villa in Trail, which was sponsored jointly by the Kiwanis Club and the Rotary Club. In November of this year, I officiated at the opening of a new addition to the Castlegar Hospital, which cost $2,600,000, and it was only two weeks ago that I had the good fortune of representing my colleague, the Minister of Health Services and Hospital Insurance, at the official opening of two new wings onto the Trail Regional Hospital, which cost $2,500,000. At the present time, we are busy reconstructing the road between Trail and Castlegar and it is my hope that there will be another contract called on this section of highway this year.

However, not everything has been rosy in our district, because on the night of April 23rd of last year, our City of Trail suffered a major catastrophe in that there was a flash flood when the Trail Creek overflowed its banks, and did a tremendous amount of damage to the homes and to the citizens of Warfield and Trail. I flew to Trail the following morning, and after assessing the damage I flew back to Victoria here, and recommended to the Premier that this area be declared as a disaster area, and that the disaster fund, which the Premier had the foresight to set up in the last year's Legislature, that this be activated. The Premier immediately agreed, and he set up a committee consisting of Mr. Williston, Mr. Black and Mr. Wallace, the Deputy Provincial Secretary. This committee then set up a local advisory committee, which is headed up by Mr. R.G. Anderson, and at this time I would like to express my personal thanks to Mr. Anderson for the work that he did on this committee, and as well, very prominent people from our area served on this advisory committee, it also included the Mayor of Trail.

Assessors were immediately dispatched to Trail and they assessed the damages which came to over $1,000,000, and it will cost the City of Trail hundreds of thousands of dollars for the damages that Trail itself suffered, and before this creek is relocated.

The Premier suggested immediately that we set up a formula in such instances, that the Federal Government doesn't have a disaster fund, and it should have one. He suggested that in a case of a disaster area within the Province, that we set up a formula so that individuals in businesses, local businesses could be immediately looked after, and that the Provincial Government would assume 60 per cent of the cost if the Federal Government would assume 40 per cent of the cost, and the Premier said that we would put up the 60 per cent immediately that it was assessed. We argued with the Federal Government for weeks and months trying to get any kind of a commitment out of them. Finally they agreed to put up $200 000 which was less than 40 per cent. The Provincial Government put up $675,000 to assist the people of Trail in this regard. However, the question of damages to Trail itself, and the relocation of this creek still have to be argued out.

So that there was no question about it, I came back and spoke to the Premier in his capacity as Minister of Finance, and he agreed, that for the city and for relocation of the creek, that he would like to see a formula devised with the Federal Government, and agreed to assume 371/2 per cent if the Federal Government would put up 371/2, and the local community would only put up 25 per cent. We've been arguing now with the Federal Government ever since that time to come up with some sort of an answer. The Mayor of Trail and myself made a special trip to Ottawa to see the Honourable Arthur Laing, and got no satisfactory reply. We've been in correspondence with the Honourable Joe Green, and no satisfactory reply. While all this was going on I noticed with a great deal of interest that a Liberal Cabinet Minister from Manitoba, namely the Honourable James Richardson, had considerable success in having the Federal Government enter into a formula with the Province of Manitoba to help Winnipeg out with flood problems.

I think, Mr. Leader of the Liberal party, that you better get busy and start representing British Columbia, and that you get on the hot line to Ottawa. If you want to help the City of Trail and our area, you'll get on the line immediately to Ottawa and I call on the Federal Government right now to come to the assistance of Trail and British Columbia in this connection.

While I'm on my feet I would like to congratulate Mr. Sam Conkin of our area, who was one of the spark plugs to get a group going called the Kootenay Industrial Development Association, known locally as KIDA, and this group has banded together to see if they can bring some industry to our area. They have had great success in the West Kootenays getting the municipalities together and the local citizens together, and they have had great assistance and encouragement from the Industrial Development, Trade and Commerce Department here in Victoria, and thank you, Mr. Minister, and I'm hopeful that this group will meet with success in the coming year.

During 1969, we opened the Keenleyside Dam on the Ann Lakes and held an official opening. Also, I've been working almost since I was elected as a member of this Legislature to protect the recreational area around Rossland, and it was only this year that the Minister of Recreation has agreed to the establishment of the Nancy Greene Winter Recreational Area, so that the loggers, the miners and the recreation people in that area, the sports people, can all work together in harmony, and I'm very proud of this accomplishment that this area will be preserved for recreation purposes forever.

Now turning to education. I think that as we stand here on the threshold of 1970, we can view the scene up to date and find that great accomplishments have been achieved over the last two decades, particularly in the decade of the 1960's. While all this has been going on, however, the cost of education has been rising alarmingly, and later on I'll discuss with you, Mr. Speaker, and members of the Legislature, how these costs are rising and what steps we are taking, trying to control them on behalf of the taxpayers of the Province, and to bring them within his ability to pay.

Of Course, part of our problem in the Department of Education is the rapidly increasing school population with the influx of people into the Province. They bring their children with them, and immediately the parents call on us to find classroom space for them in new facilities and new schools. While all this has been going on we've had inflationary pressures building up, both as to costs and as to wages, and particularly in the cost of money.

Just for a comparison of school population and costs, I would like to refer you to some statistics here, that in 1960-61 the budget for education amounted to $7 3,000,000. In a period of ten years this has now increased, and now it's $362,000,000, an increase of 400 per cent. This is Provincial. In 1960, there were around 11,000 teachers in the public school systems, whereas in September 1969, there were almost 20,000 teachers, an increase of 68 per cent in the teaching force. In 1960 we had 316,000 pupils. Now we have 500,000 pupils, an increase of 58 per cent.

As a matter of fact, the cost of operating our schools is almost reaching staggering proportions. Today, it costs to operate the public schools in the Province, if you consider they are open 200 days of the year, almost $1,600,000 a day, whereas the cost in 1960 was $516,000 a day, and in 1952, $175,000 a day. In other words, to operate the public schools in the Province each day, is costing us three times as much as 1960, and ten times as much as in 1952.

Towards the end of 1969, as I said, we ran into great stresses and strains in the educational field because of the rising costs, particularly because of the rising costs of money, and as it was stated in the Throne Speech, we suggested to the school boards of the Province that while the cost of money was so high and there was no sign of it coming down, that they curtail their construction programme to essential classrooms only.

I would like to place before you a few of these statistics on cost and construction. In the last four years we have authorized $211,000,000 for school construction, which involved 4,504 classrooms and libraries. Also, there were 214 gymnasium and activity rooms. While some people will indicate that we did little or nothing last year in the way of school construction, may I inform you, Mr. Speaker, and the members of the House, that last year we authorized a record amount of school construction in the Province, amounting to over $66,000,000. Never such a record in our history. This involved 1,200 classrooms, libraries and 68 gymnasium and activity rooms.

Since the middle of November, when we suggested to school boards that they restrict some of this construction, we have authorized over $4,000,000 of new construction, and right now as I talk, there are at least six major schools under construction, and 453 classrooms being built right today.

Between November and now, we had Mr. Phillipson of our Department doing a study of school needs, essential classroom needs in the Province, and his instructions were to find out where the pressure areas were, to find out what the essential classroom needs were in each individual school district, and to make sure that the school districts were utilizing the space properly that they had available, and he had excellent response from the school districts, and he only provided the report to me last evening. In this report he has set out the essential classrooms that he feels should be constructed within the Province, and at the present time they are now processing referenda for school districts, which do not have the approval of the taxpayers to spend money for school construction, and for those school districts which have received approval of the taxpayers for construction, we will be processing these classrooms.

My feeling, Mr. Speaker, is that in these days of frightful high costs, that only essential work should be proceeded with, otherwise the taxpayers of the Province will be paying over and over again for the cost of this school construction, and they will be paying this high interest for many years to come, and I think that if we were to adopt any other course, that we would be acting irresponsibly.

While we have been studying these costs of school construction, we have been making a very careful study of the new means and methods of school construction itself, and at my instigation the B.C. School Trustees have set up a special committee under the chairmanship of Dr. Peter Oberlander. This committee is to study new methods and means of constructing schools, whether it be done by modular construction - that is to use the same doors and type of doors and windows, and door knobs and what not in the schools - or if you're not getting different standards whether it would mean having a systems construction. That is, mass constructions of schools, with a large construction company in Vancouver doing the work, and you could order a room, or you could order a wall, or you could order a roof, this sort of work - systems construction. I hope this committee will have this report in my hands by the end of March. I also want to know from this committee, if we can save costs by the use of this method, how it could be implemented in the Province.

Another Committee-that was operational during the year was a committee headed up by a Mr. Les Canty of the Department of Education, and Mrs. Thompson, the president of the P.T.A., also was a member of that committee. They have filed a report with us on the better utilization of schools and school facilities and this report is in your hands, I instructed it to be sent out to you just recently. In line with the maximum joint use of school facilities, which has been talked about by the school trustees, by the teachers, and particularly by the ladies and gentlemen of the P.T.A., I propose to introduce an amendment to the Public Schools Act, which will allow for community participation in construction of facilities on school grounds.

While we are fighting this hard battle to keep down the costs of operating public schools, I have suggested to the school boards themselves that they could save costs of administration by amalgamation. During the year we looked at the situation in British Columbia and found that there were four unattached school districts in the Province, and in the process of the last several months we have attached three of these unattached districts to existing school districts, and the fourth one is in the process now of being attached to an organized school district. But I think, Mr. Speaker, that there are other ways that these very expensive administration costs can be minimized by school districts by amalgamation, and I am hoping that we can work together with the school trustees of the Province to bring other amalgamations into effect during the current year.

Another method that we are using to try to keep the operational expenses of schools from climbing so it's impossible for the taxpayer to absorb them, is by the use of the formula for operational costs; and from my observation this has worked very well. During the last year several school districts ran into some difficulty. The unit costs for 1969/70 was set at $11,960 per unit. For the year 70/71 it has been boosted to $12,990 which is an increase of 8.61 per cent. This is for operational costs.

I note with some interest that the Province of Alberta is adopting this formula for operating their schools within the Province, and this year they have set a flat increase of 6 per cent, and they're not going to allow any deviation from that figure. In our formula, if a school district wants to spend more than this sum of money, they can spend 10 per cent more than the basic formula. If they want to spend more than that, they can do so provided they can get the local taxpayer's approval, as he has to pay 100 per cent of the cost of it anyway. I have advised the school districts of the Province in December, that we anticipate and expect that this year that they will stay within 10 per cent of the programme, and if otherwise, they must get the consent of taxpayers in their district.

Now turning to the public school system itself, more changes occurred in the public school system in British Columbia in the decade of the 1960's than in the 88 prior years to that time. The Chant Royal Commission brought down its recommendations in 1960, and the public school system in British Columbia has changed radically since that time. These recommendations were meant to be a guide in changing education as well as retaining some of the existing features, and the report was interpreted in that light.

Now I've listed a series of changes in my written notes and I will forward them to the members of the Legislature so that they may be able to read what I've said about them, but some of these major changes were the former grade plan up to Grade 6, and then three years and three years, has been revised. Virtually every subject field in the course of education, in the curriculum, has been or is being revised. We've brought in vocational and technological fields of study into the public school system, recommendations regarding kindergartens were taken into account, school district boundaries have been changed, the length of the school day has been increased, the survey of the school libraries were made and now the libraries, in the jargon of the profession, are becoming resource learning centres of the school, the system of teacher certification has been changed, health service requirements in the school system have altered and also the schools are taking advantage of computing centres, and even some of the examination results are handled by computers today.

In recent days, in addition to the recommendations of the Chant Commission, there have been moves afoot in the school system to allow for more individualized instruction. The teaching of French in the school system - individual schools are now having programmes in the Grade 6 and Grade 7 levels. In addition, we have one school district in the Province where French is the language of instruction beginning in kindergarten and proceeding year by year. Also, the textbooks have been changed substantially in the Province. A new procedure for implementing curriculum change has been instituted. Major changes in examination procedures have been instituted. Reporting to parents has altered and great changes have occurred there.

While all this has been going on, and because of the influence of school trustees and teachers in the Province, British Columbia has been in the forefront of many innovations. The Dr. H.N. MacCorkindale Elementary School in Vancouver, for example, was one of the first experiments with the open area concept, and in fact rated a major write-up in the Reader's Digest. During the decade of the 60's, special classes were evolved for children suffering varying problems. Team teaching is also in vogue in several schools. Coquitlam is experimenting with a semester system, and as we enter into the 1970's, we propose to utilize some of the new technological advances, and intend to use educational television.

As we leave the 1960's, on observation we have the finest public school system in Canada, and one of the finest on the North American continent. We will continue to hold our place, our students are better educated, are more mature, and have better facilities than any other group of students in our history. As we proceed into the 1970's I anticipate and predict that the methods of instruction, the use of new equipment and facilities will continue to evolve and to improve.

I'd now like to turn to the post-secondary education system in the Province. In 1960 we had three vocational schools and by 1970, this year, with the completion of the Victoria Vocational School, we now have nine vocational schools in the Province and we have one under construction at Kamloops. The Institute of Technology at Burnaby has provided a completely new field of post-secondary education, a field which is now also being developed by our regional colleges in every part of the Province. These institutions, these vocational schools, have graduated thousands of young men and women into the business life of our Province.

During the course of this Session you have heard the Minister of Mines and Petroleum Resources indicate to you and to the House the tremendous development that will be taking place in our resource base industries in the Province in the next ten years. We'll need thousands upon thousands of technically skilled people and highly skilled craftsmen to take their place in British Columbia in this decade, and I think that, with the evolution in development of these technical schools through the 1960's, it's been a very important factor in our economic development, and I think that these developments will continue during the next decade, although I believe in a different form.

I'd like now to turn particularly to our regional colleges and vocational schools, I'll tell you. During the decade of the 1960's, Dr. Macdonald of the University of British Columbia prepared the Macdonald Report. In it he made a number of recommendations. At that time we had one public college, the Victoria College. We had a private college known as Notre Dame at Nelson. Among his recommendations, Dr. Macdonald recommended that we enter into the field of regional colleges and that they be established in the Province. The Provincial Government immediately adopted this report, and over the past several years has authorized the establishment of regional colleges in every comer of our Province, so that today over one-half of the student population is within commuting range of a regional college. We now have regional colleges at Vancouver in the Vancouver City College, Selkirk College near Castlegar, Capilano College on the North Shore, Okanagan College in that valley, the College of New Caledonia at Prince George, and Malaspina College at Nanaimo.

During this year I expect that there will be two new colleges coming into being, one in the Fraser Valley known as the Douglas College, which should have a very large population almost immediately - we anticipate between 1,200 and 1,500 students immediately. Also, I hope that there'll be a new regional college known as the Cariboo College with its headquarters at Kamloops. In the Throne Speech we indicated that we are carrying on negotiations with the Victoria School District regarding the creation of a new regional college on Southern Vancouver Island.

This concept of regional colleges, I think, is a very exciting one, because it combines academic programmes with technical programmes. We have found that there are a number of students who go to university, for example, and find out that it isn't what they really want and they become drop-outs, but with regional colleges students, are able to enter into the regional college on an academic programme, and if he finds that this is not to his liking he has the ability then to transfer over to a technical course or a vocational course. I believe that with the rapid development of our Province it's inevitable that more regional colleges will be coming into existence in the next decade.

Last year in my speech to the Legislature I indicated, from my observation, that there was a distinct relationship between vocational schools and the emerging regional colleges. Except for the case of the Vancouver City College, all of the regional colleges have begun to operate without any formal connection with a vocational school. We have discovered - I had a panel of experts set up to help me with this matter during the year - we discovered that there are a number of overlapping subjects, those being presently given in the vocational schools and those being given in the regional colleges very nearby, and a good example might be business courses, and we have recognized that in the future more and more overlapping will take place.

From time to time representations have been made to me that in the interest of economy and efficiency, that these two types of institutions should be combined in some sort of appropriate fashion, and particularly in the areas where these vocational schools and the regional colleges are close together. Therefore I intend now, Mr. Speaker, to announce the direction in which we intend to move this year. Effective April 1st, 1971, it will be our policy to combine, as far as we practically can do, the operations of the vocational schools with the adjacent regional colleges. In particular, we propose to meld the Nanaimo Vocational School with the Malaspina College. in Prince George our vocational school will become part of our New Caledonia College. The Kelowna Vocational School will become part of the Okanagan Regional College. In the Kootenays, the vocational school at Nelson would work in combination with a separate college, and in Kamloops we would expect to incorporate the new vocational school with the newly-emerging Cariboo College. For the time being we would propose to operate the vocational schools at Terrace, Dawson Creek, Burnaby and Victoria as we are at present, but our intentions would be to have these schools closely integrated with regional colleges. The B.C.I.T. would continue to function as a provincially operated institution.

Naturally, there will be some administrative consequences, and it's not our intention to place a heavier financial burden on the regional colleges or on their participating school boards. At the present time the Provincial Government is assuming 60 per cent of the operating and capital costs of the colleges, and it would not be our intention to upset this 60-40 sharing plan in any way. The regional vocational schools are presently financed from Federal and Provincial sources, as, for example, by the sale of services to the Federal Manpower Development,' and these routes will remain open after the two institutions are brought together.

Naturally we feel that we will have to have reasonable assurances that these combined operations will be run in a financially fiscally responsible way, and as a means of accomplishing this rather difficult feat, we're going to propose the establishment of a budget and programme articulation procedure. This procedure would involve a mechanism for advance screening of contemplated changes by colleges, but with a minimum of intrusion to the proper responsibility of the college councils or of the academic and technical staffs. I hope to be able to work out this programme in the intervening year in collaboration with the college councils and with the personnel in the vocational schools, and I hope to be able to do this well in advance of the target date, April 1st, 1971.

We think that in the years of the 1960's that these vocational schools have done wonderful work in our Province, and from all standpoints have been an outstanding success. At the present time the enrolment in the various courses at these vocational schools is more than 21,000 in the last school year. I think with the development of British Columbia in these resource areas, that we're going to require more and more technicians and skilled people, and I think that our regional colleges will give every indication of being ready and able to make these significant contributions.

Now with the time left to me I'd like to turn to the field of the universities. As we entered the 1960's, the Province of British Columbia had only one university, U.B.C. In his report, Dr, Macdonald recommended to the Government that the college at Victoria become a university. He also recommended that the private college at Nelson, Notre Dame, be elevated to a university. The Government accepted these recommendations, and went even further by the construction of a new instant university on top of Burnaby Mountain known as Simon Fraser University. So that today we now have three public universities and one private university in the Province. These three public institutions have been carrying on their steady building programme, and this is to look after the continuing growth of the student population. Among things to note, Mr. Speaker, there is an additional $15,000,000 set aside this year for them to carry on with their construction projects.

I would like to quote a few statistics on grants being given to our Provincial institutions. In 1960-61 the operating grants and the capital grants combined amounted to $11,700,000. By 196S, this had increased to $30,000,000. By '68, $65,000,000. Last year it was $80,000,000, and this year there is an additional $12,000,000, making a total grant of $92,000,000 to our universities.

It was noted in the Throne Speech that in our public universities we have three new presidents. They were installed in office in 1969. As we enter the decade of the 1970's, I think the universities will be facing the problem of being irrelevant in the exciting years that lie ahead of us. In the last two years there has been great ferment in the university area which, from time to time, has erupted in noisy clashes in the major universities of the world. These confrontations have caused all university administrations to look at their policies, to review their objectives and aims, and I think that discussions will certainly be carried on in the future. But I feel that with the enlightened administration, with the new presidents we have in our universities, that they will continue to play a very prominent part, a very important role in the development of our Province during the next ten years.

I am sure that the honourable members of the Legislature are aware of the fact that there is an advisory board, the responsibility of which is for advising of the final allocation of this sum which is appropriated by the Legislature for the operation of the three public universities, and this year the sum being set aside for operation is $77,000,000. The work of this advisory board has not been easy. I want today to pay particular tribute to Dean Chant, who has served as the chairman of the advisory board since its inception. Dean Chant has been an outstanding British Columbian, certainly in education. He has asked to be relieved of this position because he is also a member of the academic board, and I have recognized that his wishes should be respected.

In view of the experiences of the advisory board of the past five years, and considering the nature of the problems that we'll be facing in the next decade, I have thought that we should have someone join the advisory board who has had public experience and private experience in the administration of public funds. I am particularly pleased to be able to announce today that the well-known chartered accountant and former mayor of Vancouver, W. C. Rathie, has agreed to accept this chairmanship.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that great strides have been taken in all fields of education in the last decade. Students graduating from the public schools system, in particular from the vocational schools, the regional colleges, and the universities, are facing a very bright future with the rapid development that is taking place in our Province and in our economy. These students will be facing the best years of our Province which lie immediately before us. And we in the Department of Education are looking forward to the challenges of the decade of the 70's. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.