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(AM)

(Welcome to our News Conference which has been in the making for nearly 170 years.)

On July 19, 1995, the presidents of the seven universities in Metro Halifax, committed themselves and their universities "...to a serious investigation of the academic and financial advantages of a **Metro Halifax University Consortium.**" Each university has committed itself to a new era of cooperation and coordination which has been applauded as a "first" in Canada. Our Consortium, is not imposed by government but by all us working together to re-shape and re-define our place within higher education in Nova Scotia. The vision promised to the Minister of Education last July will now become the reality and the future for higher education in Nova Scotia as of today.

Universities at their best are fertile grounds for new ideas. The **Metro Halifax University Consortium** is the idea which has been nurtured and has developed into a new and healthy reality. It is the new reality for higher education in Nova Scotia and may provide Canada with the model for leadership in constructive change.

Earlier in the history of our province, it was fish, lumber and coal which fired the economy of Nova Scotia. In the decades ahead it will be the "brain power" of our universities which will fuel the economic development of Nova Scotia. The Consortium outlines a plan which will manage and develop post secondary education as a resource which has tremendous growth potential and is virtually limitless in supply. It is one which embraces technology and can be delivered over vast distances to numerous locations simultaneously. Nova Scotia's universities will provide our students, faculty, staff and the people of the province an incomparable educational environment capable of competing with that of other nations.

The Consortium will provide the mechanism to enrich and empower Nova Scotians. It will enhance understanding and generate wealth for a province which is positioned to reap the benefits of the knowledge-based economy and is probably better placed to do so than any other province in Canada and more so than most other regions in the world.

(GM)

This Consortium is the result of the goodwill, trust and mutual respect for the campus, cultural and academic integrity of each university. It does not diminish but enhances the role of each partner in the Consortium. The universities in this Consortium provide a collection of expertise and programs which create for Nova Scotia a resource which is unparalleled as a source of wealth and pride. Nova Scotia enjoys a remarkable reputation as a centre for higher education.

Higher education in Nova Scotia is a source of envy across Canada and our universities are held in high esteem around the world. Private sector and media reports all point to our success in preparing graduates for the "new economy" and our ability to compete on the national and international educational stage. There is a net inflow of students to Nova Scotia despite having among the highest tuition fees in the nation. The demand for a "grown in Nova Scotia" education will only increase over the next several decades. We are prepared to seize this opportunity.

Nova Scotia's universities, by and large, have managed their affairs prudently. The quest for this new era was sparked by the realities of impending changes in funding and the change in public expectations. With the involvement of the Chairs of the Boards of Governors and Presidents and through direction of the Vice Presidents - Academic and Administration, the Consortium has accomplished in a matter of months what seemed unattainable less than a year ago. Each area of each university has been reviewed and analyzed. It has been a difficult process for every member of our faculty and staff. However, it has been carried out with the knowledge that at the end of this process, a stronger, vibrant, responsive and high calibre group of universities would emerge. The effort of those involved to make the vision a reality is testimony to the strength and commitment of staff and faculty at our universities.

The Consortium reflects the spirit of collegiality inherent in higher education. It also reflects the desire of Metro universities to manage their own affairs in a responsible and responsive manner. The role of government and government agencies should not be to micro-manage universities.

In our report to the Minister of July 19, 1995, we noted three important components for meaningful development of the consortium:

- Commitment
- Formalized coordination
- Financial targets.

The first two have been addressed by the universities over the last 20 weeks. The question of financial targets should be answered as soon and as accurately as possible to ensure the success of the Consortium and the stability and growth for each of the universities. The provision of clear financial targets and funding will enable the universities to seek out partnerships with the private sector and do so with more complete and specific plans than is currently possible.

Furthermore our focus will also be to ensure the education of a greater number of Nova Scotians but to do so in concert with public policy objectives for Nova Scotia.

Here is what we have agreed to do:

*To do so, we want to emphasize that the government must carefully balance its need to cut public expenditures with our need for adequate funding to provide high quality education and world class ~~competitive~~ research activities.*



~~(GMT)~~ CS

The future must also provide for the new role of the community college system and address the role of universities outside the Metro area.

We recognize the important role of the five universities outside of Metro and their special relationships to their communities but their roles must be complementary to those of the Consortium. Their active participation will strengthen the province's ongoing development of higher education.

The Consortium will create a contract between the universities and the people of Nova Scotia to ensure Nova Scotia will own a post secondary education system which is creative and diverse. Our universities will be more flexible, adaptable and proactive in meeting the needs of the province. The Consortium will provide, through cooperation and partnerships with one another and others in government and the private sector, the solutions to economic problems and develop new opportunities, channels and missions to benefit Nova Scotians.

(CS)

The Consortium means:

- Universities will be customer driven: students, faculty and the community,
  
- Universities will be responsive and relevant to the diversity of our community,
  
- Universities will be more closely connected to our community's social, cultural and economic fabric,
  
- We will attract and retain the best faculty which will enhance both teaching and research,
  
- Universities will be exciting, diverse and safe,
  
- Nova Scotia universities will be the envy of the rest of Canada and sought after by other nations.

The Metro Halifax University Consortium challenges Nova Scotia to allow us to build on our complementary strengths and nurture the high calibre and globally competitive group of universities.

The business plan will create difficult and sometimes painful change, to the way our universities are managed and in the way we have thought about universities. However, the world is changing. The world has changed since the initial efforts at coordination and cooperation in the early 1800's. It has gone through "warp speed" changes in the last six years, as we moved to a world of ethernet, on-line banking, debit cards, satellite delivery and the world wide web. Our challenge is to be able to meet the needs of our students regardless of whether the student is in a high school in our "super city" or on-line from Malaysia.