

# Education Funding in Nova Scotia

*(All figures quoted are for the 1996/1997 school year)*

The bulk of public education in N.S. is financed from 2 basic sources - property taxes and provincial funding. Property taxes provide approximately 10% of educational funding, with a minimum uniform rate for the whole province. Any area which wishes to tax itself at a higher rate may do so. For every student registered in a Board's schools at the beginning of the prior year, the province gives the Board a global grant of \$3,578.00 for general purposes & \$233.00 to be used toward special needs programs. Any changes which occur later in the school year, such as children moving into or out of the district, or students dropping out or returning to school for the second semester, have no effect on funding. (It is felt that "It all averages out.") There is no restriction on what part of the educational program must be funded from a particular source. The Dept. of Ed. may also provide grants or loans for specific projects.

If a child attends a private school or is home-educated, no provincial funds are distributed. Neither the local Board, nor the private school, nor the home-educating family receives any money.

Home-educated students CAN attend public schools on a part-time basis. The Dept of Ed has determined that a student must take at least 3 courses in order for the Board to receive funding. Therefore, any home-schooled student can sign up for 3 courses at the beginning of the school year & the school will receive full funding for that student. The situation for a student wanting less than 3 classes is less clear because funding has never been established. The Ed. Act of 1996 says a student may take a class if the Board agrees, but the reality is that Boards are hesitant to accept a student unless there is funding. It is anticipated that such funding will be established for the 1997/1998 school year.

The 1996 Education Act also allows for the participation of home- educated students in whatever standardized testing is administered to public school students. In this instance, too, there is no established procedure, so Boards are hesitant to agree. Hopefully this matter will also be resolved for the 1997/1998 school year.

Another area which is still grey is the provision of speech therapy to non-public school students. As of Jan, 1997, speech therapy, which is paid by MSI, and available free of charge to pre-school children, is only available to school-age children if they attend public school. Funding is provided only for registered public school students. In 1996, the government carried out public consultations to develop a new model for delivery of speech therapy. The study group report clearly states that the public wants speech therapy made available to non-public school students, but, so far, the government hasn't even decided if it really wants a new delivery system at all. Status -- uncertain.

Many parents initially feel angry that even though they are still paying taxes, they cannot access public school services. As one considers the problem further, two other points come out. The first is that private schools receive no public funding, and home schooling is really a variation on private schooling. The second point is that, historically, jurisdictions which provide government funding to home- educators usually have excessively restrictive home education laws. In recognition of this, the Home School Legal Defense Assoc. recommends that home schoolers neither seek nor accept government funding. Despite this, many parents still feel that in areas where they adhere to the public school curriculum, they should be able to access services. Examples include borrowing texts and receiving special needs services. Status - no changes are anticipated.