

Nantes' comment 'pathetic'—lawyer

The lawyer representing a group of North Preston parents says Health Minister David Nantes comments that there is no problem with racism in the educational system are "pathetic."

Davies Bagambiire, lawyer for the group formed after recent clashes between blacks and whites at Cole Harbour District High School, said the Cole Harbour MLA's comments "show the lack of depth of appreciation" for problems in the educational system.

"I find it pathetic," he said in an interview Friday.

Mr. Nantes said Thursday at province house that "there's no problem with racism in the edu-

cational system. It simply doesn't exist."

He was responding to reporters questions about a Jan. 10 brawl at the Cole Harbour school involving a reported 50-60 people, 14 of whom were subsequently charged by RCMP.

That incident and another altercation between black and white students a day later were described as having "racial overtones" and resulted in cancellation of classes at the school for a day.

"What we're talking about here is a dispute that started to develop between two communities of different backgrounds, and a few incidents about snowball

throwing and, very frankly, everyone I talked to in the community says the second incident was put on for the TV cameras," Mr. Nantes told reporters.

"If that's the case, why did the school board close (the school for a day) if it was so trivial?" Mr. Bagambiire said Friday, reiterating his call for a public inquiry into racism in the province's education system.

Mr. Nantes said Friday his comments denying there is racism in the school system were taken out of context and that he made the remark when he was asked if he thought a judicial inquiry into racism in the Nova Scotia school system was needed.