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| ***Province*** | ***Législature*** | ***Session*** | ***Type de discours*** | ***Date du discours*** | ***Locuteur*** | ***Fonction du locuteur*** | ***Parti politique*** |
| Colombie-Britannique | 37e | 2e | Discours sur l’éducation | 8 août 2001 | Christy Clark | Minister of Education | British Columbia Liberal Party |

This is my first time on the government side of the estimates debate, so I'm looking forward to the discussions that we have. I just very briefly want to start by talking a little bit about what we are envisioning for the Ministry of Education. The government said during the election that this was going to be a new era for education in British Columbia, and we're serious about carrying out that commitment.

           We are going to bring in some changes in this ministry that we think are going to improve it dramatically. For ten years there was little political direction to the Ministry of Education. For ten years the government said the status quo was good enough in education in British Columbia. Well, this government doesn't believe that's good enough. We think we need to be constantly improving every aspect of our education system for every student in British Columbia, no matter where they live. That's what we're committed to doing. During the election we said that we were going to introduce flexibility, autonomy and choice to our school system, and we intend to do that.

           The very first focus for this ministry, though, is going to be student achievement. We want to make sure that students everywhere are improving every year in every district. That's what we want to focus on. For too long the Ministry of Education has been focused on how school districts deliver education services instead of asking what they're delivering at the end of the day. After all, school districts are supposed to be autonomous. They're supposed to be able to make these decisions about how they deliver their education services in ways that meet the needs of their local community. We're saying we trust school districts to make the right decisions. We trust that they know their communities best.

           What we will be interested in finding out is how well they are meeting their goals. We want to know if their student achievement is improving. We want to know where they need help. We want to know what's going well and what's not going well. Most of all, we want to be able to make those kinds of results public so that everyone knows how well his or her school district and his or her children's schools are doing.

           The key method of doing that is going to be introducing accountability contracts for schools. We're going to sit down with every school district in British Columbia and draw up a list of goals for that school district. Those goals might include improving their aboriginal graduation rate. It might include improving their biology results. It might include reducing the amount of violence in their schools and making schools safer places. There can be a whole host of different things that would be in their accountability contracts.

           The point is that this government is committed to sitting down with school districts, setting out goals and then helping them achieve them. If we do not have goals for school districts, we will never, ever be able to measure whether we are improving the quality of children's education in British Columbia. That, after all, is what this ministry is all about — making sure that children learn better every year, making sure that the graduates of our system are the best in the world. That is ultimately the goal of this government — nothing less than ensuring that British Columbia has the best public education system in the world and that we are turning out students and graduates who can compete on an even footing with students who come from any other system anywhere across the globe. That is our goal as a government. I will be looking forward very much to the debate today with members sitting across the floor.

           Before we go on with the debate, I would like to take a minute to introduce some of the staff that have joined me today to assist us in this. First, I'd like to introduce Emery Dosdall, the new Deputy Minister of Education. I'd like to introduce Jacquie Kendall. Jacquie is with the finance division. Keith Miller is with the capital projects division. Let me know if I get that wrong. Tom Vincent is our ADM of management services in the ministry.

           With that, I'll move the motion and welcome the debate of members.