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| ***Province*** | ***Législature*** | ***Session*** | ***Type de discours*** | ***Date du discours*** | ***Locuteur*** | ***Fonction du locuteur*** | ***Parti politique*** |
| Manitoba | 35e  | 3e  | Discours relatif à l’Éducation | 23 avril 1992  | Rosemary Vodrey | Ministre de l’Éducation et de la Formation professionnelle | PC |

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Chairperson, I am pleased to introduce the Department of Education and Training's Estimates for the 1992-93 fiscal year.

 Since being appointed Minister of Education and Training several months ago, I have been working hard and I have been listening to Manitobans' views about their education system. As the minister and as a Manitoban, I am gratified by the Interest Manitobans have shown with regard to all facets of the education system, and I am encouraged by their concern for and understanding of the issues and the challenges that face the education system in our province.

 In responding to these Issues and meeting the challenges, we-that is government, the private sector, students, teachers, school administrators, school boards, colleges and universities-must develop strong structures and processes that will take Manitobans into the next century.

 I, along with many Manitobans, envision a system that Is based on a partnership approach with a partnership made up of educators and learners, administrators, government, business and private citizens. Our government is fully committed to the philosophy of partnership and the responsibilities and the rewards that accompany this philosophy.

 I have been very proud of the staff in my department for their contribution to partnership with Manitobans, for the past year has been a very busy one for Manitoba Education and Training and the staff has risen to the challenges facing them. I would like to take a moment to mention a few of the staff members in the Department of Education and Training who have done exceptional work and have been recognized through awards.

 Mr. Devron Gaber, Director of the literacy Office, was awarded the Association of Canadian Community ColiegesJXerox Leadership Award for his work in literacy. Dr. Joan McLaren, Director of Co-op Education at Red River Community College received a Woman of Distinction Award from the YM-YWCA. Phyllis Barich, Head, Audio-Visual Resources and Services section of the Instructional Resources Branch has won the Outstanding FilmNideo Librarian Award of Merit, 1991, from the Canadian library Association and the National Film Board. John Tooth, Director of the Instructional Resources Branch was awarded the Margaret B. Scott Award of Merit, 1991, for his outstanding contribution to school library development in Canada from the Canadian School Library Association.

 Betty Seidel, Head, Curriculum and Reference Services, Instructional Resources Branch, and John Tooth, Director, received the .Special Services Award for 1992" from the Winnipeg region of the Canadian Mental Health Association in recognition of the library's assistance In providing work experience placements and employment for participants in the CMHA's employment dimensions project.

 The Student Support Branch, formerly the inner-city branch, received the .Celebrate Literacy Award" from the International Reading Association and the Reading Council of Greater Winnipeg for exemplary service in the promotion of literacy.

 I believe that these awards are evidence of some of the good work we are doing. I would also like to state how proud I am of all the other staff who have worked very hard this past year to make good things happen in education. With all of the divisions of this department working together, we have been able to create a mood of optimism within the department. I believe this is being transmitted to all partners in the education community through the consultative and facilitative efforts of staff.

 We have worked hard with members of the education community to deliver the best possible education. I believe we have very good educational opportunities in Manitoba, and I am proud of all those who are working diligently in the education system. We do many things well, and we have many strengths.

 We recognize that Manitobans want to play an active role in our education system through public consultation and partnership. My department has introduced a number of Innovative and creative initiatives which are based on public consultation and participation. During my remarks, I will refer to these programs in more detail to underscore their commitment.

 Manitobans realize we each have a role and a responsibility to play in educating our citizens, and our government is working hard to ensure that we meet our education and training responsibilities and that Manitobans are prepared to meet the challenges of a dynamic global environment.

 My department's strategic plan highlights the importance of global competitiveness and Manitobans' ability to compete. The emergence of a highly competitive and integrated global economy, rapid technological Innovation and an expanding knowledge base have major consequences for the work force. Economic Indicators predict a continued Increase in jobs that are knowledge Intensive rather than labour intensive. Employers demand highly skilled and adaptable workers who have the ability to upgrade the existing skills and to develop new ones, workers who can help create and participate In a climate that encourages entrepreneurship, innovation and economic growth and who can understand and participate fully In the complex dynamics of a competitive global environment.

 Today more than ever the key to Manitoba's economic success lies In the 'quallty of Its own human resources. Our responsibility to meet these challenges lies first and foremost with the front-line delivery of education.

 My personal experience with our educational system is based on front-line service delivery. That is where we must concentrate our energies and our resources. That is where we have concentrated our energies and resources for the 1992-93 fiscal year.

 My department's mission is to ensure high-quality education and training programs for Manitobans, to enable them to develop their individual potential and to contribute to the economic, social and the cultural life of Manitoba.

 In keeping with our commitment to this mission and the delivery of front-line, classroom-based services, we have strengthened a number of programs and services and, even in this time of fiscal restraint, have introduced several new initiatives which will enhance Manitoba Education and Training's opportunities here in Manitoba.

 The introduction of the new School Finance Program by the former minister in November 1991 was a major step in this undertaking. With the introduction of this formula, we have firmly established a pedagogical, front-line education delivery so vital to education in our schools.

 I would like to thank the staff and the external members of the Education Finance Advisory Committee who helped to develop this formula. From those I have spoken to, It is working quite well. I believe a large part of the success is the result of tying program and finance together, something that has not been done previously. By outlining a foundation level of education, we can better determine where expenditures should be going. Through the continued effort of program and finance working together, I believe our new model will continue to evolve into a very effective way of financing education in Manitoba.

 We all recognize that we are operating in an environment of limited financial resources. Furthermore, we also recognize that, given the current climate, government revenues are not expected to increase dramatically. The critical challenge facing our education system is to continue to provide quality education and education-related services and programs to Manitobans while, at the same time, living within our means.

 The Schools Finance Program enables us to do just that. The new funding program was developed by my department after lengthy consultation with many members of the education community including parents, trustees, teachers and school officials. The fundamental objective of the new funding program is to provide financial support to each of the school divisions in a way that takes into account both the educational needs of the students and the financial resources of each school division.

 The introduction of the Schools Finance Program Is aimed at ensuring greater fairness for taxpayers and equity among schools. I know the members are aware that the old formula was unfair to schools and to taxpayers alike. It should also be known that during the 1991-92 school year no divisions were funded in accordance with the old funding formula.

 In developing the new formula, our challenge was to develop a model which would restore fairness and equity to education financing.

 We have taken a clear course based on the funding of certain specific education activities. We have chosen a pedagogical base as our funding model, one which meets the demands and the needs of our students. Notwithstanding the classroom demands, the formula is also respectful of and takes into account local autonomy.

 The new approach is based on five guiding principles: access to quality education by all students in Manitoba; fairness to the taxpayer; accountability; clarity; and shared responsibility between the province and the school divisions for providing the highest possible standards of education.

 Funding is now linked to a foundation level of education in the classroom, ensuring that we protect the quality of education in our schools.

 In January, I was pleased to announce an increase of $23.6 million, or 3 percent in provincial funding for the school divisions for the 1992-93 school year. I believe this is a very significant amount considering the limited resources available to the province. I think it is even more significant when we look at the way NDP governments in Saskatchewan and Ontario have reduced funding to schools.

 Since the announcement was made, I and my staff have had the opportunity to meet with the representatives of many school divisions and to discuss the new formula as it relates to the specific needs of each division and school.

 As a result of these meetings, our government has approved additional phase-In funding of over $8 million In support of divisions affected by the change in the funding formula. This benefited all divisions facing a 0.5 mill Increase or greater as a result of the new program, 17 divisions in total.

I also announced in January that effective this year the provincial government will provide much needed financial relief to residential property owners. The one mill reduction in educational support levy will save residential property owners $10.6 million this year. The combined effects of this funding resulted in an appropriation Increase of over 6 percent to our financial support to schools.

 We will continue to meet with and to work closely with school divisions and schools to ensure that the Schools Finance Program meets our students' educational needs.

 I want to stress, as I have on other occasions, that the Schools Finance Program is an evolving model designed to adapt to changing conditions. As we see the first year of the Implementation through, we will be able to determine more easily what changes, if any, need to be made.

 During the 1992 fiscal year my department will also continue with the review and the reform of The Public Schools Act which began last year. The report on legislative reform, which I expect to receive this summer, is another undertaking that will affect the future direction of education in this province.

 The Public Schools Act was last reformed in 1980. The review of the existing legislation has been undertaken with an eye to major reform. I would like to note that this is the first time that public hearings on education legislation reform have been held in Manitoba. Again, this underscores our commitment to public input and participation.

 The response to the initial stages of this process has been incredible. Originally, a series of 20 public meetings were planned. The public Interest in this issue led to a total of 29 hearings being held in 20 Manitoba communities. During the public consultation process, parents, teachers, special interest groups, trustees, superintendents and interested citizens addressed a wide range of issues. I anticipate that the report will be completed in early summer.

 Once I have received the report, I will begin an internal review of the findings In order to assess any impact on budgetary requirements, any conflicts with other legislation, existing legislative provisions and other considerations. It is my hope that once this internal review is completed, we will be in a position to address the reports, all of the recommendations and take the next step toward major legislative reform.

 My department has also recently begun to work on the legislative process necessary for the establishment of a Francophone school board in Manitoba. As the members may recall, a court challenge launched in the province of Alberta led to the Supreme Court decision which, under Section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, granted French-speaking minorities the right to govern their own schools.

 While the court established the right of Francophone school governance, the court did not direct the provinces on how the ruling should be implemented. As a result, the Manitoba Task Force on Governance of Francophone Schools was established to advise our government on the implementation of the court order. Based on consultation with Manitoba's francophone community, we have developed a made-in Manitoba solution which provides for one administrative jurisdiction to govern francophone schools in those communities that choose to participate. I anticipate that legislation required to implement that governance structure will be drafted and will be passed in the winter or spring of 1993.

 The election of regional councils and school boards will take place in the fall of the same year. The transfer of responsibility for students is scheduled for September, 1994.

 Over the next year, my department will continue to work toward the implementation of francophone school governance ensuring jurisprudential compliance with the 1990 Supreme Court decision and constitutional compliance with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

 Earlier In my remarks, I made brief mention of Education and Training's strategic plan. We are now entering year two of this plan and many of the new initiatives and programs undertaken by my department's Post-Secondary, Adult and Continuing Education and Training division addressed the issues outlined in the plan.

 Manitobans must have the skills and the abilities to meet and to exceed the challenges of the global marketplace. We must continue to support and to encourage post-secondary adult education and retraining opportunities. We must concentrate on enhancing our skills and improving our ability to compete.

 Our government and my department are committed to providing long-term solutions which respond to Manitobans' education and training needs. Only with a skilled work force can Manitoba expect to compete and to succeed in our global economy.

 To meet this challenge my department is involved in numerous activities related to the enhancement and the development of our existing labour force. Our Workforce 2000 program encourages greater participation by the private sector in training. Canada currently lags behind its major competitors in this area.

 Our competitive advantages are threatened partly as a result of the low level of training undertaken by the private sector. The partnership that we have established with Manitoba business will help Manitoba industry and Manitobans to develop our competitive edge.

 We have established a focused approach to human resource planning with the facilitation of an important component of the Workforce 2000, industry-wide, human resource planning in key sectors, and by providing training Incentives to small- and medium-sized businesses. In addition, payroll tax refunds are provided to manufacturing employers involved in training their existing work force. Over 1,500 workers have been trained through Workforce 2000 training initiatives in the first seven months of operation. I should note that we anticipate the training of a further 11 ,000 Manitobans, based on the approval of payroll tax refunds.

 As a result of the popularity of Workforce 2000, and Manitoba employers' support and enthusiasm for the initiative, the government is providing an additional $163,000 for the program in 1992-93.

 In recognition of Manitoba's dynamic aerospace industry, last April our government entered into a $6-mllllon agreement with the federal government and Manitoba's aerospace Industry for the development of a highly skilled aerospace work force for Manitoba.. The Manitoba Aerospace Human Resource Co-ordinating Committee, with representation from the private sector and the two levels of government, was struck to oversee the implementation of this agreement. I am very proud to note that we have recently put in place the committee's first training plan which will result in the training of almost 1,800 workers in the aerospace industry.

 In addition to the $G-million aerospace agreement with the federal government, which I have just mentioned, Manitobans will soon be completing federal-provincial negotiations on a new labour force development agreement. This agreement will contribute to the strengthening of the Manitoba economy and our competitive position. It, too, will develop the skill level of our labour force in partnership with the private sector. Under this agreement, provincial and regional boards, with representation from industry, labour and social interest groups, will collaborate on labour market strategies and programs for the development of our labour force.

 As part of our government's ongoing activities in strengthening the Manitoba economy by developing the skill level of our labour force, an extensive review of the community college programming was begun in 1991. Our aim is to focus on long-term positive approaches to meeting the labour market needs, not short-term quick fixes.

 After the years of NDP mismanagement of our college system, we had a lot of work to do. The colleges had stagnated and their programs were not as relevant as they should have been. This was in large part the reason for the low profile of our colleges when the NDP were in power. As we are now starting to turn this around, I am very proud of the new and expanded programming which we are now offering. The review resulted in a redirection of programming towards curriculum and programs which address and meet the demands of students and the labour market. College programs were evaluated, based on enrollment levels, graduation rates, job placements, projected demands for graduates, as well as program cost and effectiveness.

 Consequently, we have developed and 'established college programming that is in keeping with labour market realities: enhanced technology and business management programs, computer training courses, aerospace technology programs. Expanded training options within rural and northern Manitoba ensure that Manitobans are offered education and training programs that enable them to participate fully in the marketplace and to prosper.

 In 1992-93 we are proposing an additional $2.5 million to expand college programming with an eye to further contributing to the economic development of our province through the training of an additional 640 students. Our government has recognized the need for community colleges to have greater flexibility, responsiveness and accountability in order to meet the demands of our new, dynamic, technology-based environment. Currently, colleges are direct arms of the government. This structure does not provide them with the flexibility required to meet present and future challenges.

 In consultation with the private sector, the government has moved toward a system of board governance which is based on accountability and flexibility. Since The Colleges Act was passed in July 1991, an implementation plan has been prepared and is currently being reviewed by our government. Two hundred and fifty thousand dollars has been earmarked to support the move towards board governance of Manitoba's community colleges. This funding will assist with staff development and training necessary to help college staff assume their new responsibilities under board governance. Incorporation of the three colleges under separate boards is targeted to take place on April 1, 1993.

 In addition to emphasis on improved and enhanced community college program and services, my department will very soon establish a review of university education. Twenty years has elapsed since the last review on post-secondary education in Manitoba. Consider the changes that have occurred over the past two decades: societal, political, cultural, technological and lifestyle changes that boggle the mind. University review is indeed timely.

 There are major issues arising from these changes which must be addressed. The financing of higher education, the relationships of universities to governments, social agencies, business and industry, the labour market and other sectors of the educational system, the development of a capacity for innovation and adaptivity, adaptability and improvement of the quality of university education are among some of the issues which will be addressed during the universities review.

 We will undertake this review to ensure universities enhance their participation in social, cultural and economic development of our province. I anticipate the establishment of the review commission in the near future, and I look forward to the review process consultations and to receiving the commission's findings.

 I was very pleased to be able to announce a 2.4 percent increase in university operating funds this budget year. When we compare ourselves to the rest of Canada in this regard, I believe it speaks very highly of our commitment to our universities.

 This year, Manitoba gave the third highest increase to universities in Canada. I think it is especially significant when we look at our neighbour, NDP Saskatchewan, which has actually cut funding to education, including universities. I believe our university system works very hard to meet the demands of society and students, and I am looking forward to continue to work with the universities in this regard. At the same time, the universities are autonomous bodies which must take responsibility for their own management.

 In 1991-92, my department increased funding for Student financial assistance to well over $1 0 million. I am pleased that we have been able to again increase financial assistance by an additional $615,000. This is money that goes directly to Manitoba students to help increase accessibility to our post-secondary system for all Manitobans who are in need.

 I should also note that I and my staff will continue to press the federal government for much needed changes in the federal student loan program. I have recently met with the Secretary of State on this matter, and I will continue to pursue improvements to the federal aid program.

 In addition to increased financial support to post-secondary students, my department's Program Development and Support Services division has recently established a Student Support branch to aid at-risk students enrolled in Manitoba's elementary and secondary schools. This division has also taken a bold and innovative step with regard to curriculum development, child care and distance education.

 I would now like to highlight some of this division's activities for 1992-93. The Student Support branch was established this past February in order to consolidate the departmental services to students at risk throughout the province. Our concern for at-risk students has led to the amalgamation of the former Inner City branch with the Regional Services unit. This move, along with the restructuring and reassignment of existing departmental staff, has enabled us to better serve the field in this area.

 Similarly, at-risk grants to school divisions have been increased by 30 percent in order to expand programs at the school level for schools with high concentrations of students at risk. Collaboration with divisions and schools will be undertaken to develop programs that have a positive impact on schools' success with students at risk. The focus of this new branch includes the development of classroom instructional strategies, assistance in the implementation of curriculum for at-risk students, staff development activities, parent involvement and school organization and environment. We have also focused financial and program development resources on educational programs operated by Children's Home of Winnipeg, Marymound School and Seven Oaks Centre for Youth. The $2 million allocated for these programs represents a 20 percent increase over 1991-92.

 I and my staff are very proud of the Student Support Branch. The establishment of the branch mandate and activities to address leadership and programming for at-risk students makes our commitment to these young Manitobans unique In Canada. While other provinces do have a variety of programs, we have designated and restructured staff resources into a single service delivery branch within Program Development and Support Services.

 The Curriculum Services Branch has also undertaken a number of initiatives which address

the changing needs of students in our world. In the coming year the Skills for Independent Living Program will be piloted in Manitoba high schools. This unique compulsory course targeted at Senior 2 or Grade 10 will focus on critical lifestyles including conflict management, planning and future careers, time and fiscal management, critical decision making and personal development. The course was developed as a result of recommendations from major educational stakeholders and the High School Review Advisory Committee.

 I would also like to highlight the branch's move to integrate the concepts of sustainable development into the K-to-12 curriculum. The principles of sustainable development which are based on the balance of the environment, economic activity and the health of society have been blended into the study of science and social studies and will also be a component of the new Skills for Independent Living Program.

 My department, through its Child Care and Development Branch, has also taken a leadership role with regard to special needs. During the past two years my department has been active in assisting school divisions with the implementation of the special needs guidelines. The implementation is going very well, and school divisions continue to prepare and submit annual division action plans. These action plans are proving to be very significant in that they require school divisions to identify in writing their beliefs and practices with regard to programs for special needs students. I should also note that as a result of the new Schools Finance Program special needs funding has increased by 40 percent as part of the Schools Finance Program's categorical funding base.

 I am also pleased to report that as a result of co-operative and collaborative effort on the part of publishers, authors, school divisions, trustees, Manitoba teachers, my department's Educational Resources Branch and the Canadian Reprography Collective, also known as CANCOPY, have recently entered into Manitoba's first copyright licence agreement. This agreement permits Manitoba teachers and students copyright access to approximately 1.5 million authors and publishers worldwide. In short, most books, periodicals and other copyright material normally used in the course of teaching may be used with no legal restrictions or repercussions. This agreement has literally given Manitoba students and teachers access to the world. The terms of the agreement include reciprocal agreements with other countries including Australia, the United States, Great Britain, France and Germany. It also ensures access to heritage language publications.

 Before concluding my remarks about the Program Development and Support Services Division, I would also like to highlight some of the activities of the Distance Education and Technology Branch. Historically, this branch has provided leadership in . the development of distance education in the province. Emerging technologies have led a number of schools to explore the use of fibre optic telephone lines to carry two-way, audio-video classroom programs between schools.

 My department has created a technology task force on the distance education needs which has recently begun its consultative process. This process will result In the preparation of a plan and the development of a policy to address distance education needs from Kindergarten through to post-secondary institutions.

 Based on the task force report, school funding will be reviewed to enable funding for pilot projects which will further explore the use of interactive video technology. I also intend that this report assist In the determination of department policy and funding support regarding the role of provincially operated distance education delivery systems. These are the local-school-divisions-based networks. I believe that it is indeed an exciting prospect to use new technologies to enhance and to improve the educational opportunities in the classrooms of our schools.

 I should remind my colleagues that Manitoba Is a leader in using telecommunications-based technologies such as satellite technology, audio teleconferencing and computer communications technology to Instruct students at the K-to-12 level in low-enrollment or remote classrooms.

 I should also note that Manitoba has recently closed the gap with the provinces of Alberta, British Columbia and Ontario that existed In the mld-'50s with regard to distance education technologies within the post-secondary education sector. The first Year University by Distance Education pilot program is unique in providing a full first year of university instruction to remote communities through the use of interactive telecommunication based technologies.

 The Manitoba Satellite Network will continue to lead the way in using television and satellite technology interactively permitting remote students and their instructors to interact freely during instruction.

 Other provinces have traditionally used television and video technology in a broadcast-only mode. I am pleased to note that these provinces have begun to adopt the interactive instructional mode that we in Manitoba have used for the last three years. During the coming year, the Distance Education and Technology Branch will continue to pursue the resource potential of emerging technologies and will continue to create and to provide educational opportunities for all Manitobans.

 The Independent Study Program is another program that gives Manitobans access to education and training. Last fall, the Independent Study Program successfully moved to Winkler, underscoring our government's commitment to decentralization and to the improved delivery of educational services. The reorganization of this program has led to enhanced independent study services. We have established a tutorial program which offers in-person service at the Winnipeg and Winkler locations or assistance through its new toll-free telephone service.

 My department has also recently established regional supervisors to provide assistance to schools and to school divisions regarding distance education and independent study in order to get input on ways to improve and to enhance the program. Our government recognizes the importance of an effective and responsive educational system to the long-term economic and personal well-being of Manitobans. The emphasis my department has placed on distance education, new technologies and independent study is in direct response to this understanding and this belief.

 Many improvements have been made to Manitoba's educational system, and with the initiatives and the programs that I have highlighted during the course of my remarks, our progress will continue.

 The course that I have outlined for 1992-93 is based on the delivery of quality education and training opportunities for all Manitobans. I have outlined major Initiatives in elementary and high school education, advanced training, retraining and skills development and university education. I have spoken of the innovative and the creative ways that my department will meet the demands and the needs of students, the labour market and other participants in our educational system.

 We will continue to explore new technologies, new systems and models which will enable Manitobans to compete and to succeed in the global marketplace. We will continue to explore, develop and establish partnerships with the private sector, other levels of government, teachers, students, parents, school boards and trustees. We will continue to invite Manitobans to participate in consultation processes and, most importantly, we will listen to them. Manitoba Education and Training has worked hard over the past year and has demonstrated by the initiatives and the programs we have planned for 1992-93 that we will continue to address Manitobans' education and training needs.

 I am proud of the budget that we have established for the Department of Education and Training for the coming year. As the minister, I am confident that the strategy which we have developed will ensure that Manitobans are equipped with the skills they need to compete, to succeed and to prosper.

 We will now here from the critic of the official opposition.