|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ***Province*** | ***Législature*** | ***Session*** | ***Type de discours*** | ***Date du discours*** | ***Locuteur*** | ***Fonction du locuteur*** | ***Parti politique*** |
| Ontario | 28e | 4e | Discours sur l’éducation | 16 juillet 1971 | Robert Welch | Minister of Education | Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario |

Mr. Chairman, as is customary the minister does have a statement to make.

As in most other fields, I am sure members of the committee would agree, the last 25 years have witnessed a period of tremendous and unprecedented growth in the field of education. Since the beginning of the postwar boom in the late 1940s the school population of the province has been among the highest of all jurisdictions-that is, in so far as its growth is concerned-in the western world. The number of our elementary pupils has increased by three times since 1948, and within the same period our secondary enrolment has increased by 3 1/2 times. It is interesting to note at this stage that in the last five years alone-that is, between 1965 and 1970-the enrolment in elementary schools increased from 1,320,000 to 1,465,000. This is an increase of 11 per cent, and simply to house these children almost 5,000 new classrooms or their equivalent had to I be provided in this period of time. In the same period, the secondary school enrolment increased from 419,000 to 557,000. This of course is a staggering growth, an increase of 138,000 students or 33 per cent, and to accommodate these students another 4,600 classrooms were required. Taken together, these accommodation requirements mean that we have been opening the equivalent of a 50-room school every 10 days for the past five years.

When one considers the necessary planning, the design and building, the demands made on the construction and building supply industries, the furnishing, and equipping, the coordination of transportation and, most important, the staffing and the design of the programmes, the full magnitude of this achievement becomes quite apparent. It involved the collaborative efforts of local school boards, of the provincial government, of private industry and of local communities all across the province. And that it could be done and that in fact it was done is perhaps one of the greatest examples we have of the co-operation and dynamism that of course characterized our province. It has been a tremendous physical achievement simply to provide basic accommodation nor the increasing number of students. But during this period we have not only provided for the sheer increase in population, we have also managed to develop a fuller and a more complete educational experience. I would point out to you at this stage as well that in 1965, 46 per cent of the students leaving secondary school had obtained a graduation diploma. By 1970 that figure had increased by almost a fifth to 56 percent. Present indications, however, point w the fact that the challenges which we faced in the past in terms of the sheer magnitude of growth may now be over. Because of lower birth rates in recent years, elementary school enrolment has peaked in size and is expected to decline throughout the rest of this decade. Secondary school enrolment, although continuing to rise, it expected to peak within six years, after which it will likely decline in reflecting the lower birth rates currently influencing the elementary school enrolment. Recognizing the implications of these changes and wanting to reduce the heavy tax burden on the local taxpayer, the government has taken a leadership role in educational finance by developing a new set of guidelines on educational expenditure. Summarized as briefly as possible, the four main objectives of these guidelines, Mr. Chairman, are as follows:

1. To approach quality education for the students of all ages in this province as 'Our first priority in the distribution of available money;

2. To have the provincial government pay 60 per cent of the overall cost of elementary and secondary education in Ontario by 1972;

3. To equalize the financial capability of widely different jurisdictions so that, as far as possible, no community will be penalized by its lack of assessment as compared with larger high-assessment ,communities, and no urban areas with special inner-city needs will be forced to meet those particular needs unaided;

4. To control the cost of education in Ontario through controlling the amount of increase in educational expenditure. Now, let us be just a little more specific, and in doing so let me first point out that when the government announced its intention to pay 60 per cent of the cost of education by 1972, The Department of Education has already established ceilings on the expenditures that were eligible for grant. At that time a board could, if it wished, spend above the granit ceilings and pass on 100 per cent of the extra cost to its tax payers. But Ontario has learned from experience that such an arrangement is not an effective deterrent to substantial increases in the cost of education.

As a result, ceilings were developed to control the rate of increase of educational spending. These ceilings were determined-and I think this is very important background against which we can discuss them when we come to the appropriate vote, Mr. Chairman these ceilings. Were determined after examining the expenditure estimates of virtually every board in the province. And they were designed to ensure that a high standard of education could be maintained where expenditures were high, and programmes extended where expenditures were low. The ceilings apply to ordinary expenditures and are not applicable to debt charges, capital expenditures from revenue funds or expenditures for transportation. A board's 1971 ceiling on ordinary expenditures for elementary schools is its 1970 offering for grant purposes increased by up to $75, with a maximum of $545 per pupil. For secondary school purposes, its 1971 ceiling is its 1970 ceiling increased by up to $75, with a maximum of $1,060 per pupil. Now for boards in defined cities the grant ceiling is 10 percent higher for elementary school pupils and five per cent higher for secondary school pupils. These defined cities, by the way, are Toronto, Hamilton, London, Ottawa and Windsor. These additional amounts have been provided to enable boards in large cities to cope with inner-city situations such as the language and cultural problems of many immigrants, and socio-economic problems that are more prevalent in Large urban municipalities. For boards in the territorial districts the ceilings are 10 per cent higher for both elementary and secondary pupils. This, of course, is necessary because of the higher cost of living in the north combined with the sparsity factor. In 1970 the ceilings on ordinary expenditures for grant purposes were, as you know, $500 and $1,000 for elementary and secondary pupils respectively. For those boards that were spending in 1970 in excess of their ceilings, the department is requiring a one-third reduction in the percentage rate of overspending.

I will try to give you 'an example. A board that spent $600 for an elementary school pupil last year-that is in 1970-had an expenditure that was 20 per cent above its ceiling. Therefore in this year, 1971, such a board is required to reduce the percentage rate of overspending by one-third of 20 per cent, or to 13.4 percent. This means that that board's ceiling fall 1971 expenditure is 113.4 per cent of the $545, or $618.03 per pupil-an amount which is greater by $18 than the expenditure per pupil in 1970. For those boards whose spending levels in 1970 were below their ceilings the increases in 1971 can be, as I have indicated, as much as $75 per pupil.

Considerable use of the word cutbacks has occurred during this period with the obvious implication that the ceilings have forced boards to reduce the number of dollars they could and would like to spend on each pupil. The ceilings are so designed-and I emphasize this once again-that with the possible exception of two relatively small boards in the territorial districts, no board in the Province of Ontario will be forced to reduce the number of dollars it can spend on a pupil in 1971. In fact, the grant assistance to school boards under the 1971 grant regulation will be approximately 20 per cent higher than for 1970. The calculations of the department indicate that before it would be required to spend less per pupil in 1971 than in 1970, an elementary school panel of a board of education would have been exceeding its 1970 ceiling by 33 per cent, and a secondary school panel by 20 per cent. No board or panel was exceeding its ceilings by that extent and consequently none will be forced to spend fewer dollars per pupil in 1971 than it spent in 1970. I have already made some reference to the necessity of providing higher ceilings for the defined cities. It should be noted that the department is also cognizant of the needs of boards serving developing suburbs under the need for new school buildings in these areas is established, the grants paid toward the construction of schools are very generous. Because these costs are in the extraordinary category, they me not affected by the expenditure limitations. I would add, too, that as the enrolment increases, this increase is reflected immediately in higher grants.

The department has every reason to believe that the resulting deceleration in the rate of increase in spending is a realistic and, indeed, an attainable goal. The determination of the order and the choice of priorities to meet the constraints is left to the boards in order that there be maximum flexibility to adjust to local situations.

I think also this would be the appropriate' place to point out, Mr. Chairman, to you and to members of the committee, that a very careful review of the ceilings for 1972 is already under way with particular emphasis being placed on possible weighting factors. We shall be working in conjunction with the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education with a number of school boards m. the province and, indeed, several other bodies in obtaining this pa11ticu1ar objective. Before I leave the subject of educational finance, may I also make reference to the Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology across the province. It is of interest to note that for the first time, in this fiscal year, .the Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology and Ryerson Poly technical Institute, will be receiving their operating moneys based on a formula, which has been developed on the same general principles as those underlying the financing of the universities of this province. By this means the government will be able to estimate more acutely the amount of funds required to support a predicted enrolment, and the colleges in turn can estimate their operating income on which to construct their operating budgets.

But having said all that, of course, I come back to the point, which I was attempting to establish before these pamcu1ars. It would appeal that them of bricks and mortar in education is coming to an end and that we are now turning more of our attention from the quantitative to the qualitative aspects of education in .the province. Indeed, I would like to point out to you that we are standing on the threshold of a new in society and 'as we approach the life of our province-and the lives of each individual in this province-with a renewed emphasis on the priority of truly human values. And although this shift toward greater human responsive classes reflected in virtually all aspects of society, nowhere is it more evident than in The Department of Education. In fact, this emphasis is an integral part of virtually every one of our programmes.

In a democratic society that does truly value the individual, education is not satisfactory unless it recognizes the unique personality, the unique abilities and needs and interest its and the unique aspirations of each individual student. There are few jurisdictions of comparable size anywhere in the world, which have been able to go as far toward realizing this aim as we have in Ontario, and m. la very real sense we are only just beginning. One aspect of interesting this need is the provision of individual attention to students, and path of this goal involves pupil teacher ratios. In elementary schools, for example, the overall provincial pupil-teacher ratio in 1954 was 32 to 1. By 1970 ill: had dropped to 25 to 1. In secondary schools, the ratio in 1954 was 25 to 1. By 1970 it had dropped to 16.5 to 1. And this, ill: has to be remembered, all of this took place during a time of unprecedented increase in the number of students in our classrooms. At the same time, programmes of a more diversified and flexible nature have been developed. The official guidelines for the primary and junior divisions as expressed in the series of curriculum documents expresses an educational philosophy of guided growth in the attainment of basic learning skills, of sensitiv1ty individual needs, and of humaneness in the handling of children. With this official backing, more and more of the teachers in our elementary schools are learning how to give practical expression in their classrooms to this basic philosophy. And at the same time, the secondary school programme is undergoing a series of basic changes designed to give effect to a similar philosophy of individualization, but in a way consistent with the greater maturity and the changing needs of our older students. One change that has been made Ito facilitate the implementation of this philosophy has been to aware a diploma, not on the basis of successful completion of a programme specified by the department, but rather for the successful completion of a certain number of credits which are largely chosen by the student.

There is quite a difference and if the member for Hamilton Mountain (Mr. J. R. Smith) will perhaps raise that question at the time that we discuss curriculum I will go into in with him in great detail. As of September, 1970, me-half of our secondary schools had fully, and another 19 percent partly, implemented this change. Another important aspect of individualization is the creation of a system that allows Students to move ahead in the subjects in which they are successful, without having to advance lock-Step, grade by grade, on an all-or-nothing basis. of September, 1970, 60 per cent of our secondary schools had fully converted no this more flexible method of subject, as opposed to grade, promotion, and a further 25 per cent had made the change in part. In order to make the full programme of the school available 1\:0 all students, the preparation of individual timetables is required, so that each student can select his own programme rather than being confined to the programme of a particular class. About two-thirds of our high schools now provide individual timetables for each of their students, and another 25 per cent are able to do this for at least a proportion of the student body.

By the beginning of the 1972-1973 school year, all of our secondary schools will have converted to the new plan and will be further .modifying their organizational structure to better fits the needs of the secondary school pupils of the province.

The schools have never before, Mr. Chairman, offered so extensive and varied a programme. In the elementary schools-and I am sure there are many of us here who are parents of young people in these school programmes, who have had some first-hand experience with the changes that are going on and the excitement attached to them-in the elementary schools, opportunities for outdoor and out-of school education are now quite common, as are the use of materials and an ever-widening range of non-print media. No longer is education confined between the four walls of the classroom and the two covers of the textbook. Materials and methods are becoming available that allow each teacher to provide the kind of learning environment and tools suitable to each child. In the secondary schools, for instance, the department has made available more than 150 curriculum guidelines. These guidelines when adapted within the school, according to its particular needs, generate literally hundreds of courses designed for different stages of maturity and varying interests and abilities. Schools also have the opportunity of developing courses beyond the rationale of the departmental guidelines in order to meet special needs and interests, and in this connection over 500 of these locally developed courses have been approved by the department for diploma credits in the school year 1971-1972. The calibre of these courses, Mr. Chairman, is such that it has been possible to approve over 90 per cent of the requests made. This is a real tribute to the professional competence of our teachers and their supervisory officials and I know that it is viewed as a development that was never before considered possible in this province on such a large scale.

In striving toward the ideal of quality education for all people in the province, I think you would want me to make particular mention of recent achievements in the area of special education. Very generally, a growing response to children with special learning needs is being felt in all parts of the province, reflected particularly in the number of staff appointments at the board level, and the significant growth in programmes since 1965 dealing with special education. Based upon this growing development, I have great pleasure in announcing this morning that changes will be made in the regulations governing the education of trainable retarded children. Effective September, 1972, retarded children will be eligible to apply for full-time school attendance at the same age as any other child and will have the right to attend until the age of 21 and not be limited to the age of 18 as is presently the case.

Admission boards under the jurisdiction of the divisional boards of education will evaluate and I think this is a very key point in the development of this position-admission boards under this jurisdiction of the divisional boards of education will evaluate the readiness of each retarded child for schooling and they will determine the extent of their attendance at the schools. These changes will firmly establish the fact that school law governing the basic rights of attendance apply to all children-their handicapping condition not withstanding- and further that divisional boards of education have a clear-cut responsibility to meet the needs of all children within their jurisdiction.

Now I should point out as well that a number of boards of education may wish to implement this policy during the 1971-1972 school year and individual applications to effect this change will be favourably considered by the department.

These changes, however, will in no way limit the department's involvement in educational programmes for the retarded in institutional care. In accordance with the pattern established in 1966, The Department of Education will continue to fulfil its responsibility for staffing and conducting the programme of education with the hospital schools.

The successful partnership in this programme between The Department of Education and The Department of Health is also evidenced in the continuing development of the regional diagnostic, assessment, and treatment centres established as a result of the white paper tabled by the Minister of Health in 1967.

The government, as you know is also embarking on the construction of a new regional centre for the hearing handicapped in London to provide for expanded opportunities for the hearing impaired in western Ontario. In addition to operating as a school, it will serve as a resource centre for school boards, parents, and children. A new sports building is under construction at the School for the Deaf in Belleville, which it is hoped will be completed for school opening in September. And extensive renovations have been undertaken at the School for the Blind in Brantford, with construction already begun on new facilities to be opened in 1972.

But so much of what we do-whether in the area of primary and secondary education, or the programme of special education offered throughout the province-really depends on the capabilities of the individual teacher and, for this reason, no presentation of this type would be complete without spending a bit of time on the whole subject of teacher education.

One of the goals to which this 'government is deeply committed is the upgrading of academic qualifications for teachers in Ontario schools. In 1969, the academic entrance requirement for elementary teacher education was raised to grade 13 standing with an average of at least 60 per cent. This year, the requirement is being raised to one year beyond grade 13 in an academic degree programme at an accredited university, comprising a minimum of five full credit university courses.

An announcement has now been made that the academic requirement for entrance to a teachers' college in Ontario in 1973 for most prospective teachers will be an approved university degree in arts or science.

But I would he quick to point out that changes in the entrance qualifications reflect only one area where this upgrading is taking place. Another is the integration of teachers' colleges with universities. The report of the minister's committee on the training of elementary teachers was tabled in the Legislature in March, 1966. At that time, the then Minister of Education said this:

The department and the minister are in complete agreement with the general programme of integrating the teachers' colleges and universities which has been suggested, and it will be the policy of my department to implement plans to this end as quickly as possible.

Now, in fact, Lakehead Teachers' College was integrated with Lakehead University on July 1, 1969. The University Of Ottawa Teachers’ College was integrated with the University of Ottawa on September l, 1969, and Teachers' College in Windsor was integrated with the University of Windsor on July 1, 1970. Agreement has now been reached as well for the integration of the St. Catharines Teachers' College-in that very favoured part of the province-with of course Brock University.

Even within the teachers' college courses themselves, important improvements have been made. In 1968 the programme of elementary education at the teachers' colleges was completely revised by a committee of principal and the staff of the teacher education branch. The revised programme reduced the final examinations from 10 to five, and placed renewed emphasis on foundation subjects and on the study of curricula.

In 1970, the primary school specialist course was also revised to place more emphasis on child growth and development, of the child and society, and curriculum studies.

In addition, practice teaching programmes, normally nine weeks long during the academic year, are now being planned in much closer co-operation with college area school boards and the officials of those boards.

Now, Mr. Chairman, before concluding my remarks, I simply would like to add a few words about the present activities of the youth and recreation branch in the area of citizen participation and the more meaningful me of so-called leisure time. With no accepted traditions and few established principles for guidance, the Department of Education is continuing to take the initiative in testing new ideas and experimenting with new techniques to encourage people to be-come more involved within their own communities and by doing so, acquire a stronger voice in making those decisions which directly influence their lives.

To meet the changing needs of the people of the province the services provided by the youth and recreation branch of this department have been expanded in the following areas:

A consultative service has been developed that is accessible to municipal authorities and community agencies within the province.

Several community-school projects have been undertaken in which we are attempting to illustrate how communities may benefit from an expanded use of their schools, and how schools in turn may enrich their programmes by using the community as an alternative to the classroom.

Increased attention has been given to the cultural interests of people through such activities as the Ontario Theatre Conference, which resulted in the formation of Theatre Ontario, a parallel to Sport Ontario which was formed three years ago. A special focus has also been directed on the arts through a summer programme known as Youtheatre now decentralized into seven regions), Summer Sounds in Music, Art Trek and craft production centres.

Greater emphasis has been placed on the well established Youth-in-Action programme. This co-operative venture has now been expanded to include 85 communities across Ontario, and involves many young people who have been given their first opportunity to contribute directly to the development of their own community or agency as an alternative to summer employment.

Added support has been given for participation in physical activities through the Province of Ontario Winter Games mid additional encouragement provided to sports governing bodies through increased financial support for the hiring of executive and technical directors.

Greater assistance has been provided for the growing profession of recreationists by encouraging the organization of the Ontario Recreation Society, by supporting the formation of the- Ontario Recreation Educators Association mid by stimulating and coordinating recreation research through the Ontario Research Council on Leisure which publishes Recreation Review.

The Provincial Institute has been established in two regions where community leaders and teachers for adult classes can take part in leadership training programmes offered in co-operation with the regional council, made up of representatives from the community, the school system and the local community college.

Throughout all of these expanded services, Mr. Chairman, the branch has left the responsibility for planning and evaluating so-called leisure programmes with the participants and with local agencies created to operate these programmes. With only a few exceptions, the youth and recreation branch is assisting, enabling and encouraging meaningful participation in society without becoming a direct operator of programme activities.

In short, having said all these things, important changes are presently taking place in virtually every aspect of the activity of this department. Since I have only touched on a few of these changes in these introductory remarks, I look forward with some anticipation to discussing in fuller detail these and other developments as the estimates are presented for the consideration of this committee. I hope particularly that we will have an opportunity to discuss 'in Fuller detail some of the implications of our present trend toward greater local autonomy, especially as it reflects our interest in meeting the individual needs of students and our redefinition of schools as true community resources.

Although it is true that there is "no royal road to learning," we have to recognize that a society that is insensitive to its children is also insensitive to its future. Through a responsible use of human and financial re-sources, we in Ontario have been able to build a broad network of educational opportunities which rivals any other educational system in the world. All of us in the department are committed to this goal of providing an environment for learning experiences which will stimulate all students to become independent, mature and responsible people. I am optimistic that with increased under-standing and co-operation, our leadership position in education will be strengthened and improved in the months and years to follow.

As I have indicated, Mr. Chairman, I look forward to a discussion of our estimates in further detail.