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| Ontario | 30e | 4e | Discours sur l’éducation | 29 juin 1977 | Thomas Wells | Minister of Education | Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario |

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, I'd be most happy to. As a matter of fact, that was the first item that I had down. I might say I don't intend to have a formal opening statement; I would like to just deal with a few things informally, perhaps highlight a few things I think are important that have happened in the last year and that will be happening.

I would, however, like, as you have already asked me to do, to introduce the staff, because I think we have a very competent staff, people who are experts in the whole area of education and people who I think we are all very pleased are working for the Government of Ontario in the Ministry. of Education. Certainly, having been minister for aver five years now and working with many of them far this length of time. I can say that they bring a great background of experience, they are very competent people, they are people who are highly respected in the field, and who add much to the education system of this province.

The first is my deputy minister, George Waldrum, who is sitting to my immediate left. Then, sitting over against the wall, are Mrs. Ethel McLellan, assistant deputy minister, administrative and financial services division; Next to Ethel is Gerard Raymond, the chairman of the Council on French Language Schools. Next to M. Raymond is Mr. R. A. L. Thomas, assistant deputy minister, program division. Next to Mr. Thomas is Dr. H. K. Fisher, assistant deputy minister, education administration division.

Without putting them in order of seniority, precedence or anything, we will just start down the wall. First is Keith Waites, my special assistant; Roly Fobert, executive assistant to the deputy minister; Phil McAllister, legislation branch; Mary Barclay, director of the budget branch; David Lyon, who is in the budget branch; Larry Kent, my executive assistant.

Across the back, Bob Copeland, QC, in our legal branch; Dorothy Dunn, director of our teacher education branch; Dr. Gordon Bergman, director of special education branch; Gaetan Filion, executive director or whatever we call that title after Management Board finished with it-of the Languages of Instruction Commission of Ontario; John Storey, director of the curriculum branch; Alex McCague, executive assistant to the deputy minister, program branch; Jane Opper, who works for an unnamed political party, and Wendell Fulton. You may not know Wendell, but we should introduce him. He is the legislative liaison -officer or jack of all trades. in that area for OSSTF. He doesn't work for the ministry but he is a great help to all of us in the Legislature.

Rand Ide, chairman of the Ontario Educational Communications Authority, and Sandy Birkenmayer, general manager of corporate affairs, OECA. Andre Chenier, executive assistant to Gerard Raymond; Charlotte Lemieux, executive assistant to the assistant. deputy minister, education administration; Ted Overton, director of educational data processing; Joe Tabone, director of the information records branch. The reason we are not always so sure about titles is they change every year. Cliff Pitt, director of the Ontario Institute for. Studies in Education; Joe Rees, director of the correspondence branch, and Sam McKeown of the Education Relations Commission. That gives you a pretty good run down.

Mr. Chairman, perhaps in just the few brief remarks that I would like to make in opening the consideration of these estimates, I would like to first say that, of course, In talking about the estimates of the Ministry of Education we are talking about only part of the money that is spent on education at the elementary and secondary level in this province. There is a portion of that money raised at the local level by local school boards, which, of course, highlights the fact that education in this province is a shared responsibility, a joint responsibility both an policy making and in implementation by a variety of people.

The Ministry of Education staff that you see here and the other staff that work in the ministry help to direct and set provincial guidelines and provincial policy which is implemented at the local level led by a group of elected people, again just as we on this committee are and as the minister of Education is, school trustees land in this province we have, about 1,820 public and separate school trustee.

Incidentally, II thought this was an interesting statistic when I was looking at the number of school trustees. It is always with me by various people, the number of teachers who are school trustees, and in our records, of course, we have a record form, which indicates the occupation of school trustees. By doing a statistical analysis of those records, we find that 131 of the 1,820 school trustees in this province list their occupation as teacher. That represents only seven per cent and it is not, in my mind, an unduly large number of people from that profession represented 'among the trustees of this province.

These trustees are all part of the 194 school boards in this province and these are the legally constituted authorities that have, under The Education Act, voted by and given by us in the Legislature, certain rights and responsibilities to carry out. These trustees have in their employ about 93,000 teachers. They have a number of supervisory officers and they're looking after something like 1,973,140 pupils.

From this we can see that education in Ontario is a very large enterprise. It's an enterprise in which la number of people are engaged and in which decision-making and decision and program implementation are done by a variety of people at a variety of stages with the prime historic component being that the education system is controlled politically.

At one time it used to be looked upon with disfavour to talk about the political control of education, but the fact of the matter is that Egerton Ryerson, over 100 years ago, decided after running the system from a non-political base, that the person in the provincial government responsible for education should be a politically responsible person, a member of the cabinet, elected, and therefore responsible to his Premier and also to the Legislature and to the people, and that the local policy-making on education should be carried out by locally elected school trustees. I think we have to keep that in mind when we think about the kind of things we talk about here ,and the kind of policies we want carried out and the kind of time lines that it takes to implement 'any new policies or changes in education. It’s a vast enterprise and it takes the co-operative efforts of a lot of people, teachers, trustees, supervisory officers and ministry people working together (1) to develop changes in directions in education and (2) to carry out the implementation of those. The best way, in my way of thinking anyway, for carrying out, guiding and running the education system is in a spirit of co-operation among all those groups and not in a spirit of confrontation. In the estimates we have before us today, we're ,being asked to vote $2,130,490,000. This represents a percentage increase of 8.1 per cent over last year's estimates.

The way this money will be spent is broken down in this manner: 88.3 per cent is in general legislative grants to school boards; 7.6 per cent is in payments to the teachers' superannuation commission adjustment fund and so forth, all those matters pertaining to superannuation; 0.07 per cent to other transfer payments, and 3 per cent direct ministry operating costs. So, therefore, you see of the $2.130 million about 96.6 per cent is going out in transfer payments to some other body, and 3.4 per cent, or something, in the neighbourhood of $73,289,000 is being spent on direct operating expenditures, that being the 3.4 percent.

Therefore, when we approach this task of looking at the estimates of this ministry, we're doing it from two points of view: looking at (1) the $73-odd million that's being spent on direct operating costs of this ministry and (2) on the 96.6 per cent which, as I say, is being spent by these other bodies which are the partners in this educational process, and we are, in fact, raising on the provincial tax base this money and passing it on to these people to operate under the kind of guidelines that we have set for them.

In connection with the direct operating expenditures of the ministry, I'd like to make just a couple of comments. The complement in this ministry has been steadily decreasing -and by that I mean in actual terms, contrary to what some people pull forward at times, that the regular complement of a ministry is decreasing but people are hired on contract. In actual terms, the complement of this ministry is decreasing. In 1974-75, the complement was 2,553, a reduction of 12.5 from the year before; in 1975-76, we went down 114 more; in 1976-77, 89 more, and in 1977-78, 62 more is projected, which will leave the authorized complement of the Ministry of Education at 2,288. It's very interesting that when you look further, beyond that, you find that of the 2,288, 59 per cent of that complement work in institutions, or 1,354; 576 work in the head office, and 358 in our regions. Or, put another way, of that total complement, about 17 per cent are educational officials; 10 per cent, other professionals; 49 per cent, support staff, and 24 per cent, teachers who teach in the various schools that we run directly.

What are some of the things that have been occurring in the last little while? I think the one I'd like to mention first is that in the area of curriculum we've spent a lot of time over the last year listening to all these constituent groups in education, dialoguing with them and receiving reports from them. As a result of that, and based on the introduction in 1975 of The Formative Years-which again set a pattern, I think, and gave a direction to the ministry that we were looking for a slightly different direction. a little more structure to the curriculum, a little more direction in the fundamental subjects while at the same time keeping very much to the fore those innovations that had come in in the area of development or self-worth, moral values education, development of an appreciation and understanding of Canada-all those things that had been added to the curriculum and had enriched it are being kept, but an increased emphasis is being put on the fundamentals ,again, just in case somebody might have strayed off. I think The Formative Years has served to alert people to that and is, in fact, serving that purpose.

Therefore, as we move to look at the secondary school and particularly the last two years of the intermediate division, it was decided we should have more mandatory subjects. Therefore, students entering school this September will be taking a basic program throughout their secondary school years, which will consist of nine mandatory credits. Of course, in their first two years there'll be two English, two mathematics, a science, a Canadian history and a Canadian geography.

Coupled with that introduction of those mandatory subjects came a look at the curriculum guidelines that we were producing and the decision to produce more comprehensive curriculum guidelines. In this area there will be more common core. I think that while the implementation of them is not as speedy as I would have hoped, given the fact that, as I said earlier were dealing with a very large enterprise and a number of people, I must say first I am very pleased that many classroom teachers were able to participate in the development of these guidelines.

I am sure all of you realize they are not without controversy. I particularly noted and I am sure my friends from the Liberal Party will want to note, that there is a great deal of controversy about 'the history guideline.

I must say I am not convinced we are wrong and the historians are right. I noticed Ian Macdonald said yesterday at the Destiny Canada conference that ignorance of history in Canada has been one of the problems. I would not be surprised if some of the historians and their view Of history has led us to believe that the way they want history taught will get us to the point where we can establish the kind of things that we think young children in our school systems should have in order to base the foundation for their being good citizens of this country.

As to the charges levied against the history guideline that it is more of a political science document or more 'Of a sociological document, I am beginning to believe that perhaps that is the kind of document it should be; that The understanding and study of some of these contemporary issues in Canada, such as English-French relations and the keeping together of this country, can be done just as well from this kind of basis as from some of the traditional historic bases.

I know we will be into an argument over this in this committee. I am prepared to argue with the history professors because I am not sure that they are all right and we are all wrong. They represent one point of view and there is, of course, another point of view. I must say that history teaching to date in the schools has been based upon the point of view put forward by the history professors, and everybody is crying for a change.

These guidelines, I think, will bring a great degree of stability to these core subjects and will be an advance. As I say, I am very pleased that many classroom teachers participated in the writing of these guidelines and we were able to work with the federations and so forth. We will be working with them as we evaluate those guidelines, as more guidelines 'are produced, 'as more

support materials are produced for the school system starting both with the formative years and moving up through the intermediate years and so forth. The other area where a lot of emphasis has been given is evaluation. You will have just received a copy of our report of the work group an evaluation-just; and quite justly so, I might say. Although it is dated April 15, I could have very easily have put the date "June" on their and that would have been just as valid. I don't really feel I have to offer any explanation for it, but the report is from a work group that was reporting to me as minister and was not given a mandate particularly to publish the report, although as you know it has always been my position that I like to keep and make public all documents that we have of this nature. It was received on April 29, two days before the election was announced, and my decision was not to deal with it at all until after the election. Therefore, it has been dealt with very quickly and expeditiously after the election. I don’t see any real problem with that, and you have an opportunity now to pursue that.

But you will see there is a high degree of differing opinions on how evaluation should be carried out. The work group has presented certain opinions. They have really played down the idea of any kind of standardized testing. They have not completely shut the door on that, but they have suggested a lot of things in the area of evaluation that we, of course, will do and that should be done in regard to the classroom teacher-the development of tests that the teacher can use far diagnostic purposes in his or her own classroom, and so forth. The suggestion that there should be an evaluation procedure in each curriculum guideline with the goals stated in the evaluation procedure is something, which we are going to move ahead on. But the question still remains unanswered as to whether standardized tests, state-wide tests such as most American states are now implementing or have implemented, would or would not be beneficial in this province. My conclusion is that the group of educators who worked an this particular document were not particularly said on this, although as I say, they didn't close the door and we're not closing the door an that at the moment. It's something that will still be looked at by the ministry, as we moved ahead with the kind of evaluative processes that they outlined. I just want to make again the one caution and statement that I've made many times when I talk about this particular subject, and that is that really as far as I'm concerned the evaluation, the test, whatever it be, first and foremost must help the student and the teacher who teaches that student.

The implementation of standardized tests for the sake of being able to publish a record in a newspaper once a year to state, goody, our schools now show that 78 per cent can read, although it may salve certain people’s egos and so forth is not justification enough to embark upon a major program of standardized testing.

That I think is why we've asked various people who are professionals in the education field to look at it very carefully, so that if and when we do it in this province it will not be done in a spirit of haste in the sense that because everybody in the United States is doing it, we should do it. There is no question, as I have said many times, that standardized tests are sweeping the United States. In some degrees, we have grown to regret picking up quickly same of the ideas that have swept the education system of the United States. I think we have to evaluate and tailor these things to our particular uses and to the uses of the young people of this province, and that's what will happen in evaluation.

The other area, closely related to evaluation, where there is a lot of work going on is in the Interface study. This is a very important report and I think it's been a very good report. It's been very helpful to both our ministry and Colleges and Universities. We're reviewing that at present. Many people have been submitting briefs based on the Interface because, as you know,

the Interface study did not make any specific recommendations. Rather, it brought out a body of research from which people could draw conclusions and make recommendations. So that vast amount of research is now being used by the educational organizations, the teacher groups, the trustee groups, the public, the home and school associations : and so forth, to make recommendations. They're being made to a committee chaired by Gerard Raymond, made up of trustees, supervisory officers, OTF, ministry representatives and so forth.

Out of that will come certain recommendations, and recommendations for changes in policy in those areas governed by the Interface. Before those recommendations came to me and go from me to cabinet there will be also interface and interchange between the group that Gerard Raymond is heading up, and the Committee on University Affairs and the Council of Regents of the community colleges, who are going through the same process of course with the recommendations from their constituent groups in so far as universities and community colleges are concerned. When all this is completed and it should be completed around July 31, we should have some recommendations on that particular area-the interface between the last two years of secondary school and the first years of university-and the policies concerned with that particular time. We should have some recommendations coming forward, and they will be very important ones perhaps in the evaluation area and in a lot of other policy areas, particularly in curriculum. Educational finance is also a very important area-the grants system, the types of grants, the amount of grants and so forth. We've always approached this also in a co-operative way, again feeling there should be dialogue along the trustees and the teachers and ourselves as to the development of grants systems. I'm very happy that, again, a group of all the people concerned in education has met together and has done, I think, over 100 or 115 hours of work in looking at and understanding the grant system of this province, and suggesting changes. That group is at present reporting to me along with a lot of other reports, which will be used as we develop the 1978 grant system. That, hopefully, will again be available, as it was last year, in a very early time line, probably sometime in September.

We also spent a lot of time in this last year on the program for French as a second language. We introduced the program, the emphasis being to increase the basic level of knowledge of French among our English-speaking pupils, to develop an awareness and an appreciation of the cultural fact of this major cultural element in our Canadian life, and to provide opportunities for a lot of students to develop a meaningful level of bilingualism.

The program has been introduced. You've all had an opportunity to pursue it and I am sure we will have many questions on it and have much discussion on it. It does, of course, involve expenditures of around $67 million over the next three years; some of that money in increased grants to school boards and some of it in direct support programs in teacher education, curriculum materials. learning; materials and student exchanges and so forth. The first phases of that money are in these estimates. Coupled with that was the announcement that there would be increased funding to our minority-language school systems-in the majority of cases this being the French-language school system and in some instances the English-language. Here again, we have identified extra amounts above the normal per pupil grants for the minority-language school system because research has shown us that it does, in fact, cost more money to operate a minority-language school system. lit costs more money for a board to operate than in a system where the majority language is the one that is used in the majority of its schools. This again is a program that puts in the hands of boards more money to enhance and improve the minority-language school system.

The area of multicultural education has received a lot of attention. In The formative Years we stated that children should be encouraged to learn about their own origins and understand ,and appreciate other ethnic and cultural groups. That set the stage for a continued development. We established a ministry committee on multicultural education. We liaised with very fine work that was done by a committee in the Toronto Board of Education. We recently, within the last year, hired Dr. Mavis Burke to assist us in our curriculum activities related to multiculturalism. We produced a guideline called Multiculturalism in Action, which is a practical book to help teachers develop programs in this area and also to get at some of the root causes of racism and discrimination in our school systems and help teachers in this particular area.

Money has also been allocated to the learning materials development fund. A resource list for a multicultural society, quite a large book, listing all the kinds of resources available has been prepared jointly with Culture and Recreation and is now available in schools. The heritage language program was announced recently and this allows school hoards to offer language programs outside the regular school hours to those groups in the community that wish to preserve their heritage language and have their children take that language. This program again will probably amount to the allocation of something like $2 million in its first year, and I think it is a significant step forward.

We announced recently that we would he setting up a commission on declining enrolments. I had hoped to have that already in place before our estimates. It will not be ready until the beginning of the week, but I hope we will probably still be in our estimates-we will have a chance to talk about that. I think there is no question that declining enrolments and all the inherent problems that this new phenomenon causes us are going to be very significant. One of the major needs is for a public dialogue in this particular area and a laying on the table of that can or should be put into effect by various bodies, school hoards, the Ministry of Education, teacher training institutions and so forth. These should be put on the table, dialogued and we should, out of all that, come up with some policy that will set the course for the years ahead so that declining enrolments will not adversely affect a fine school system. Special education has received a high priority and will continue to receive the high priority it does in these estimates. It's interesting, when you start looking at an area like special education and you see figures, that in 1974 we could isolate $15 million in grants for special education and in 1977, in the elementary schools, that $15 million will have risen to $51.7 million. This is money in addition to the regular money that is paid to school boards. In the secondary area it has risen from $700,000 to !!I6.5 million. We all know there is a lot more to be done in the area of special education, a lot of programs still to be developed, a lot of help still to be given to school boards, a lot of encouragement to school boards to develop programs. Those things, of course, will take place. I think the last thing I'd like to comment upon is Bill 100. I am still have the opinion, as I have been, that Bill 100, a bill that set down guidelines for teacher-school board negotiations, was a very necessary and for ward step in this province. For the first time we established guidelines under which teachers and boards would negotiate, something, which we did not have. in this province until that bill came into effect. It has not completely eliminated work stoppages but I have to say, and I would say unequivocally, it has brought a degree of order out of what was a very confused situation. They tell me that to date there are 74 settlements already of next year's contracts. That's about a third better than we were at this time last year and I hope that pace will continue. There were, of course, three strikes during this year: Durham, which was settled through voluntary binding arbitration; Peel, which was settled through a mediation-arbitration type of arrangement, and Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry, which was settled by a negotiated settlement. Five disputes went to voluntary binding arbitration and three disputes in this last year went to final offer selection. We will continue to monitor what happens with collective bargaining under Bill 100. I shouldn't let the occasion go by without commending the Education Relations Commission for the outstanding job that they have done. The commission itself, headed by Owen Shime, and the staff, under Doug Lawless, and Sam McKeown being one of the members, have done an excellent job in all those things that they are required to do under Bill 100.

In the last year, for instance, 71 factfinders were appointed. They appointed the arbitrators they appointed the selectors under final offer selection. They have acted as a model, to my mind, of the way that type of commission can operate in the public sector in an area like teacher bargaining, which is public sector bargaining, with an impartial commission that can assist the parties to arrive at conclusions of their bargaining and assist them to solve disputes when disputes arise. I think many groups around the country and around the United States are looking at the operation of the Education Relations Commission as that kind of model. I might just mention that Harry Arthurs, who was the vice-chairman and was also a tower of strength in the early years of that commission, has retired. He has resigned because he has gone on a year's sabbatical and he's been replaced by George Adams, who has just completed a term as Assistant Deputy Minister of Labour, and is going to be a law professor again at the law school.

I think with those comments on some of the more important aspects of the matters that have held our attention in this last year and some of the statistical things that I have given you, I will conclude and just say that I am again pleased to present my ministry’s estimates for full discussion. This is the first opportunity this committee has had to get at a full set of estimates, but we'll have a good discussion and I look forward to a frank exchange on all these matters.

I think, here again, we want a co-operative approach to education among all of us in the political process, just as we all co-operate in the educational community, always remembering what we're concerned about is the education of the children of this province and the fact that we do have a good system, a fine system of education and what we're trying to do is make it better. We really waste our time if we try to decide how bad it is around here, because I don't think anyone would dispute the fact that we do have an excellent education system and that what we're dedicated to, as politicians, is making it better intrus province. In that kind of spirit we can have a good 22 hours of discussion about these matters that can be very helpful and can have good effect in the education system of this province.