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| ***Province*** | ***Législature*** | ***Session*** | ***Type de discours*** | ***Date du discours*** | ***Locuteur*** | ***Fonction du locuteur*** | ***Parti politique*** |
| Ontario | 32e | 2e | Discours sur l’éducation | 8 juin 1982 | Bette Stephenson | Minister of Education | Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario |

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Another example of the planning process in action is the secondary education review project, which we established in April 1980. The mandate of the project was to examine almost every aspect of secondary schools, focusing in particular upon the credit system, content and organization of the curriculum, standards and discipline, and the role of the school in preparing students for employment.

Duncan Green, a former director of education for the Toronto Board of Education, who worked with four committees broadly representative of Ontario education, and other important sectors of the community chaired the project. Individuals and organizations were invited to contribute their comments and proposals to the project in writing for consideration by the committees.

There was full consultation and participation. In fact, responses to the discussion paper, which was published in May 1981, vastly outnumbered the original submissions to the project. About 600 submissions were received prior to release of the paper and another 2,400 following its publication. In addition, more than 2,000 signed form letters or petitions were submitted.

From July to October 1981 the responses were systematically analysed, considered and taken into account in the preparation of the report and its 98 recommendations. Many of the recommendations presented in the discussion paper were revised, some were left unchanged, a few were omitted, and several new ones were added. I received the report on October 31, 1981, and since that time there have been a large number of additional responses to the report from individuals and professional groups.

It is clear from the widespread public involvement in this exercise that people have faith in the potential of this province's school system. The public expects the schools to provide students with a solid, useful basic education that prepares them either for direct entry into employment or for post-secondary education.

While recognizing the need to take into account the wide variation in students' interests, capabilities and commitment, most people proposed that the curriculum be more prescriptive, especially in grades 7 to 10. Among both the professional respondents and the public, a desire for clearer and more stringent standards of achievement and discipline was consistently expressed.

While the achievement of such standards must lie with the students, parents and educators in each school, it is clear that the ministry is expected to provide the direction, the curriculum requirements and reasonable supervision to ensure that the opportunities for students throughout the province are both equitable and consistent.

Since November ministry officials have been analysing the report, along with the many detailed submissions stimulated by the report, in order to prepare plans for the continuous renewal of the secondary education system. Although I am not in a position to speak to the details of the government response to SERP, I can assure you that a detailed statement will be made in the months ahead. I can also assure you that educators at the local level will be given plenty of lead time so that any changes may be introduced in an orderly, planned manner.

Increased attention is being paid today to the role of our secondary schools in helping to prepare young people for employment. The report of the secondary education review project recommended, among other things, that secondary schools increase their activities in the areas of skills training with programs which were more in line with the requirements of the world of work.

For years, many secondary school graduates who specialized in business or technological studies courses in the senior division have moved directly into productive employment immediately after graduation. This expectation remains unchanged.

The role for secondary schools in skills training however has become more visible with the introduction of the linkage programs in 1978. This program, applied to selected technological studies, provides excusal for registered students from the basic level of the institutional component associated with anyone of nine regulated apprenticeship trades. These include motor vehicle mechanic, general machinist, industrial millwright, construction millwright, cook, baker, hair stylist, retail meat cutter and major appliance repair.

Some 22,000 students are currently registered in the linkage program this school year. While we know that not all will become apprentices when they graduate, they and many others with skills in both regulated and nonregulated trades will find the transition to the world of work much easier because of the training which they received in secondary school.

Another initiative under linkage that is currently being explored is that wherein students in selected business or technological studies courses will be eligible for advanced standing in colleges of applied arts and technology certificate or diploma programs for work successfully completed while in secondary school. Subjects such as drafting, welding, electronics, heating, refrigeration and air conditioning, secretarial science, accounting and data processing are all being examined for secondary, post-secondary realignment in this further adaptation of the linkage concept.

A new technological studies document embracing 42 different trade subjects ranging from woodworking to aircraft mechanics is currently being developed by officials in the Ministry of Education. This new guideline, in addition to being a resource for teachers in the provision of technical literacy courses, will include all of the necessary elements for the development of a wide range of in-depth training opportunities for students to learn skills that are compatible with the requirements of the world of work.

In Ontario I can say with pride we have developed a world-class education system, one whose expertise in many areas is in growing demand overseas. In that light I should like to report on the activities of the Ontario Educational Services Corp., which has now completed its first year of operation. Several small contracts have already been secured and have been or are being carried out. One example is the training of Malaysia's trades instructors in our colleges of applied arts and technology.

Much support has been provided to the private sector in the way of marketing assistance on several large projects, some of which are now at the bidding stage. The next year promises to be an even more productive period, during which it is hoped that significant business will be obtained as a result of our marketing efforts.

Earlier this year, I visited Jordan and Bahrain on behalf of the Ontario Educational Services Corp. to sell educational ideas and hardware. I thought that the l0-day trade mission was very successful and the benefits to Ontario and Canada should result in agreements worth millions of dollars in educational technology and training.

In Jordan negotiations involved the development of a telecommunications institute following extensive preparation by a Canadian team consisting of Ryerson Poly technical Institute, Ontel Communications, Mitel Corp., Environmental Consulting Services and our own corporation.

In Bahrain, I signed an educational services procurement agreement developed by the Canadian Commercial Corp. The agreement covers areas of future co-operation, including teacher training, curriculum development, the provision of contract faculty, and the development of institutional support systems.

While our strategic planning within the ministry continues to examine the long-range issues facing education in Ontario, we are complementing these efforts as well with operational planning activities relating to the day-to-day operations of the provincial school system.

For example, a revised statement regarding the curriculum process for Ontario schools is being developed. This approach will incorporate several advantageous features, including a more co-ordinated response to new curriculum improvements, opportunity for systematic development of consensus on program issues, and opportunity for sharing information to meet needs for public accountability for school programs.

A discussion paper will be released within the next few months which will outline this new approach to provincial tactical planning in education and demonstrate a spirit of dialogue and partnership. It is within this framework of shared responsibility that the ministry has been expanding its capacity to respond to the increasing demand for accountability.

The approach to evaluation used in the development of procedures for review of curriculum is guided by some basic assumptions. They are:

1. That evaluation exercises should provide information to meet both the need for improving programs and the need for public accountability;

2. That a comprehensive evaluation program should address and meet the decision-making and planning needs at both provincial and local levels; and

3. That the system evaluation exercises should be as open as possible at all levels and in all phases.

I am pleased to report that the provincial advisory committee on evaluation and practices has now been well launched. The committee, which is chaired by Dr. Bernard Shapiro, director of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, has concentrated its efforts on issues related to the Ontario assessment instrument pool and to the co-operative review process. It has thus far submitted 13 recommendations for consideration. The committee is now addressing issues related to the performance appraisal of teachers, principals and supervisory officials.

The Ministry of Education has developed and employs a variety of approaches for the collection and analysis of data concerning current curriculum activity. The major role is assumed by the regional services division through various types of reviews such as provincial reviews, which provide provincial data, related to specific programs. Several of these reviews are conducted and reports are published annually. Similar types of reviews are also used within regions and within individual boards to provide more specific information on a chosen area.

A special review conducted during the past year has examined regulation 273 which governs the school year and school holidays. A very comprehensive survey of professional and public opinion has resulted in a set of recommendations to amend the regulation. We are currently in the final validation phase of the proposals with school boards, professional associations and the public. It is anticipated that this process will be concluded early in the fall.

Another evaluative approach for which the regional services division is responsible is the co-operative evaluation and development of a school systems program. This co-operative model uses internal and external school system teams to examine and report upon any or all of four system components- purposes, roles, programs and student achievement. Thirty school boards have asked for and have been in this program to date.

Data gathering and reflective analysis of policies is an on-going process using information derived from the more formal procedures just described, and also from the numerous liaison contacts between the ministry and the many varied educator, trustee and special interest groups which exist today.

Another recent and related project is the Ontario assessment instrument pool, which is also Called banque d'instruments de mesure de l'Ontario. OAIP and BIMO were initiated in 1978 to assist educators at all levels in their evaluation and reporting responsibilities. Their role is to provide educators with reliable information on student progress and program effectiveness.

As of last week, nine pools have been distributed, mathematics and mathematique, English, history, geography and geographie in the intermediate division; French as a second language for grades 6 and 10, and chemistry and physics in the senior division.

In September the ministry expects to publish several BIMO pools: anglais and francais in the junior and intermediate divisions; chimie and physique in the senior division.

In May 1982 the ministry pilot-tested 3,000 draft instruments in intermediate division geography, senior division physics, junior division mathematics and mathematique, and French as a second language for grades 6 and 10.

These instruments were screened with the co-operation of personnel from 500 schools in 78 boards across Ontario. Instruments, which survive the screening trials, will be published in the 1982-83 school year to supplement the pools which have already been distributed.

In 1982 field trials were conducted of instruments in mathematics and English for grades 7, 8,9 and 10. The trials involved a representative sample of 185 schools and 65 boards across the province. The results will provide benchmarks from which future assessments can be be compared. Such information gathered on a periodic basis will allow the ministry to monitor trends over time.

I believe that we have made significant progress in the area of program development during the past year within the limits of available resources. I should like to emphasize that, although the overall financial picture remains stringent, the general legislative grants to school boards for operating expenses in 1982 will be $2.74 billion, an increase of $268.7 million, or 10.87 per cent over the 1981 total of $2,471.3 million.

For 1982 the maximum ordinary expenditure per pupil recognized for grant purposes is $1,972 for each elementary pupil, an increase of 13.99 per cent over 1981, and $2,718 for each secondary pupil, an increase of 13.11 per cent over the last year.

The general scale of provincial support is the single most important factor in maintaining quality programs without an undue burden on local mill rates. Per-pupil increases in the 13 to 14 per cent range ensure that with restraint and prudent management there will be no deterioration in the quality of education, even under the stresses caused by inflation and declining enrolment.

We do recognize however that school boards cannot in general cut costs in direct proportion to the enrolment decline, especially in smaller boards. For this reason we introduced in 1981 a graduated system of special assistance above the amounts normally recognized to soften the impact of declining enrolment on school board budgets and mill rates. This funding support will continue for 1982.

While I do not wish to dwell on the details of the 1982 grant arrangement which we will undoubtedly discuss later, I should like to mention that we have increased the weighting for grant purposes of pupils in grades 9 and 10 of Roman Catholic separate schools from 1.15 to 1.19. This means in effect that each grade 9 and 10 pupil counts as 1.19 pupils for grant purposes.

On April 5, 1982, I outlined in the Legislature funding changes for continuing education.

The ministry will continue to fund the heritage language program, driver education programs, credit courses and adult basic education programs. The latter, including education in adult basic literacy and numeracy, citizenship and language instruction for landed immigrants, and English as a second language for adults.

There will, however, be no direct provincial funding for general interest courses, but per-pupil amounts will be made available for continuing education activities not included in the categories acceptable for direct funding, and to make school facilities available to community groups for the provision of program.

The amount for 1982 for the September to December period will be $2 per elementary pupil and $6 per secondary pupil.

The draft policy statement on continuing education has been released, and we have sent to chairmen of school boards a memorandum on continuing education policy review, enclosing the paper entitled "Draft Policy Statement of the Ministries of Education, Colleges and Universities on the Provision of Continuing Education through the Schools, Colleges and Universities of Ontario"-a very long title.

The draft policy statement was developed after consideration of the views expressed in the responses to the 1981 document, "Continuing Education: The Third System, consultation with other ministries involved in continuing education, and priorities within the limits of the financial resources available.

School boards will further consider this draft policy statement, colleges and other interested groups, with the expectation that final responses will be made to the ministry by September 1, 1982.

In the matter of school facilities and capital grants, the level of requests by school boards for capital funds for school construction remains high. The school boards requested $354 million for this purpose for the construction year 1983, but continued pressure on financial resources has constrained the ministry to allocating funds for the most urgent pupil-place needs in developing areas.

The total program of spending in 1983 is $90 million for all classes of school construction.

In 1982, the ministry will continue to provide $5 million to assist school boards to achieve energy use reductions, and funding is also available for converting school buildings from the use of oil to either gas or electricity.

The elimination of asbestos hazards in Ontario schools continues in 1982. Most schools have reported no asbestos hazards, and corrective measures have been taken in 922 schools. This program, costing $8 million this year, should be completed totally by 1984.

The ministry has published three reports on vandalism and is now involved in a detailed evaluation of some successful programs, which have been in place in six schools around the province. A report on this work will be published later this year.

In the May 13 budget, the ministry received an additional $5 million for capital projects for school repairs. This amount, when handled through the regular capital approval process, will generate a total of $7 million in project costs and will be used for about 50 repair and renovation projects totalling $4,175,000.

An additional $1,504,000 will be used for asbestos removal and clean up, and another $1 million will go to energy retrofit programs in the schools. This program will concentrate on a large number of small projects including roofing replacement, heating systems, elevators, fire safety work, small additions, etc., and will create about 1,000 temporary jobs. It has been possible to mention only briefly some of our activities, but I have attempted to emphasize the importance, which we are placing on careful and sound planning, both strategic and operational, with respect to all of our responsibilities. The students in Ontario schools deserve this and we will continue to strive to ensure that the obligation is met.

There is little doubt in my mind that we are quickly approaching an educational crossroads in the schooling of children and young people in this province and this country. One way that we can prepare for a future that almost certainly will be replete with shocks and surprises is to open up our minds and to think about it, always remembering the advice of the late Dr. Robert Jackson:

"Never lose sight of the fact that the child as a learner is not only the centre of the school system, but the only reason for its existence."