

Preparing for double-cohort

The first day of school is always a battle between order and chaos. Knowing that Ontario colleges and universities in September 2003, will be faced with two graduating classes of high school students, the Ontario government is taking steps now to ensure that order triumphs.

This double-cohort situation was created when Ontario decided to join the vast majority of North American jurisdictions and limit high school to four years. The last OAC graduating class and the first graduates from the new curriculum will be eligible for post-secondary schools in the same year.

Preparation for the increased enrolment includes: creating new student spaces, providing increased operating funds to support the higher enrollment, working with post-secondary admissions to ensure that students are treated fairly, providing student support for planning the cost of post-secondary education, providing students with the information needed to make informed choices, and increasing support for apprenticeship programs.

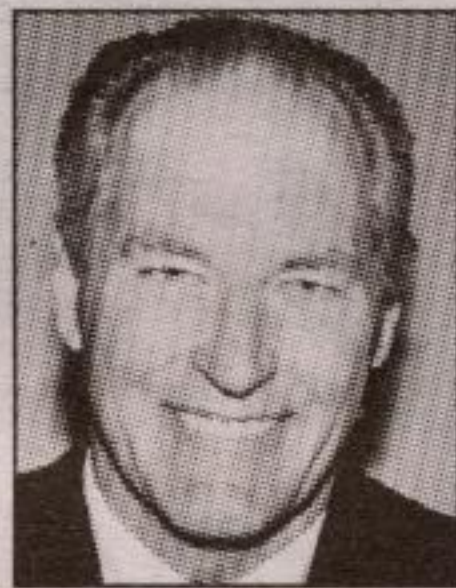
Through SuperBuild, Ontario's infrastructure planning and funding agency, the government is investing \$1.8 billion in campuses across the province.

This will create more than 73,000 new student spaces through 59 new capital projects. There are currently 420,000 students enrolled in Ontario's post-secondary system.

Since 1999, SuperBuild has provided \$297.5 million to universities and colleges to help renovate buildings to meet the needs of a new generation of students. By 2003 the number of residence beds is expected to grow by 16,229, an increase of 35 per cent over 1998-99.

The government is also promoting high-quality instruction by helping institutions attract and retain the best faculty. Operational support will increase by \$102 million in 2002-

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Ted Chudleigh

03 and by \$293 million in 2003-04.

The government has involved students and post-secondary institutions in this plan from the beginning. In fact, each year the government has surveyed students in the affected years about their future plans to help adjust projections accurately.

Getting work experience while still in school is a key first step in building a successful career. In the last three years the Ontario Summer Jobs Strategy has assisted 172,450 students prepare for and succeed in business start-ups or in finding summer employment to build their careers.

The government has set a five-year cap on tuition increases in most programs, and is working to ensure the Ontario Student Assistance Program can provide funds to all eligible students. In addition, the government is creating new scholarships and making changes to enable students to keep more earnings from part-time work without affecting their level of Ontario student loan.

All this does not guarantee a perfectly ordered September 2003 in post-secondary institutions. It does mean the government has taken the necessary steps to provide for the future of Ontario's young adults whether they continue in school or enter the workforce.

—Ted Chudleigh is the MPP for Halton

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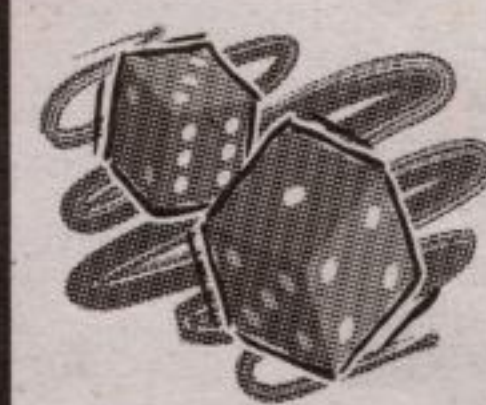
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