



William Hodgson  
... avoid lock-step system

# Education exchange

Southern York Region's two members of the provincial legislature, William Hodgson (York North) and Alf Stong (York Centre) didn't waste any time sending out their versions of the curriculum changes recently announced by the government for next year's school term.

Hodgson, a Conservative, says the combination of new core subjects and some options will "refine" the system, but his party does not want to go back to province-wide examinations.

The Liberals' Stong says his party has always believed in emphasizing the basics and he regrets there will still be "no guarantee that firm guidelines will be established" on a uniform basis throughout the province.

The statements of both MPPs are published on this page.



Alf Stong  
... standards are necessary

## Hodgson: Balance is essential

By William Hodgson  
MPP York North

QUEEN'S PARK — Education remains a significant priority both in terms of education quality and financing. Recently Education Minister Thomas Wells announced some basic adjustments in the core curriculum for secondary schools for the 1977-78 school year.

The substance of these adjustments evolved from many months of policy discussions in the education ministry and follow the introduction of the new curriculum policy for the elementary schools entitled *The Formative Years*, early in 1975.

The emphasis at the elementary level is on the development of the

essential skills — writing, reading, arithmetic and grammar — to provide a sound foundation of skills for the student entering the secondary level.

The natural progression of this approach consists of requiring each Grade 9 and 10 student to take two credit courses in mathematics, two in Canadian geography and/or history, two in English and one credit in science. Also, students in the senior grades must take two more English studies courses.

Translated practically, that means a Grade 9 student next September will take these courses, plus in all likelihood subjects such as health and physical education and French. The latter two could be chosen after

encouragement of the principal and counselling staff and in consultation with parents of that student.

The same basic approach would be used in selecting Grade 10 subjects — a balanced combination of mandatory and optional subjects. Undoubtedly, these changes will represent some important changes in the credit system. Over the past few years Ontario's secondary school system has seen the adoption of new courses of study to meet the complex demands and realities of the 1970s. These courses range from environmental, family and urban studies to economics and people and politics.

What is evolving in our secondary schools is a

recognition that improvement in the core curriculum area was essential to provide a well rounded education. Through this combination of core and elective courses we also provide continuous encouragement to our children to start making choices about their future and to start being responsible for their future.

In the recent past the one missing element in this process has been the absence of maturity in some of our young people, according to our critics.

Nobody can deny that criticism, but it has to be tempered in two respects: (1) some children mature at an earlier age than others; (2) that does not mean that throwing the bathtub out with the child.

Restoring province-

wide examinations may be a popular and soothing development for many people, but there is no way that a return to the old Grade 13 departmentals will cure the obsession for objective evaluation and testing. It might satisfy the critics' needs to impose uniform standards, but the question remains: Will it help our young people in the long run?

The education minister

undertook an investigation of testing procedures this past summer to determine what approach would serve Ontario's students. Those investigations will continue for some time before a final decision is made.

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## Stong: A yardstick provides comparison

By Alf Stong  
MPP York Centre

QUEEN'S PARK — One of my legislative functions for the Liberal Party has been to sit as a member of the Education Committee. In that capacity four members of the Liberal caucus have examined the educational system in Ontario extensively over the last few months.

On Oct. 6, Ontario's education minister announced changes in the Province's educational system. The Liberal Party had for some time made no secret of the fact that we intended to unveil our education policy at a fund-raising dinner to be held on that date, and the minister was certainly aware of our intentions.

From statements made by our party's representatives in recent months, as well as during — and prior to — the last election campaign, he must also have had a clear idea of what our "New Directions for Education" would be.

The minister outlined the changes which had been decided upon — mainly that more solid "core" subjects, such as English, mathematics, Canadian history or geography, will be required subjects for students entering Grades 9 and 10 at the beginning of the 1977-78 school year. While we welcome the government's refinements, we regret that there is still no guarantee that firm guidelines will be established to ensure that

students throughout Ontario will be given comparable instruction, and assessed on similar achievement valuation standards.

Ontario's educational system is financially supported by the taxpayers in the belief that a literate, skilled and articulate population is vital for the well being of this province. Our schools have a vital role to play in helping and encouraging our young people to become productive members of society, informed citizens, able to meet the challenge of today's competitive world.

Under the existing educational system, as Liberal Leader Stuart Smith has pointed out, "pupils are placed in an environment where the degree of free choice is excessive for their level of maturity and inconsistent with the real world, creating unrealistic expectations."

We believe that standards must have a place in our educational system, at every level, as they do in the public service and private enterprise, where individuals are evaluated against specific performance criteria. Province-wide educational standards would provide a yardstick against which pupils, parents, teachers and administrators could measure accomplishment.

Our party has long

advocated a required core curriculum, and our recommendation is that at least one-half of the instructional time (and most prescribed homework) in the primary and junior divisions of our schools should encompass English reading comprehension (French in francophone schools);

formal communication skills such as precision in spelling, grammar, punctuation and spoken language; second language and culture (as trained teachers become available); arithmetic computation, measurement and associated problem solving; basic Canadian studies; fitness and health education.

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