

Queen's Park

Great pressure on education

By ALF STONG
 Our educational system in Ontario, namely rising costs combined with a critical declining enrollment. Provincial figures predict that total enrollment in the elementary and secondary school system will drop from a 1978 level of almost 2 million to 1.7 million by 1990 — a reduction of 11 per cent.

This trend combined with rising costs due to inflation means that Ontario's school system is, and will continue to be, under severe pressure. We must plan for a period when we simply won't need as many schools or teachers.

The general theme running through the comments on the quality of education is that the present standards are too low. Parents, teachers, taxpayers and students, all reveal a sense of frustration and disappointment in their claim that this perceived deterioration in quality is responsible for apathy in the attitude of those teaching, and mediocrity in the achievement of those being taught. Apprehension is expressed by opponents of our so-called permissive society that permissiveness in schools will further perpetuate a decline in social values. Collectively, the letters disclose the feelings of people who are seriously concerned about the future.

TOWN OF VAUGHAN NOTICE OF CLOSING OF A HIGHWAY

Take Notice that the Council of the Corporation of the Town of Vaughan proposes to consider, on March 5th, 1979, a by-law to stop up and close the following highway.

That part of the road allowance known as Southview Drive that is shown as part 3 on Plan 64R7404 being part of Registered Plan 2468.

Plans showing the highway in question may be inspected in the office of the Clerk of said Corporation at the Municipal Office, 2141 Major Mackenzie Drive, Maple, Ontario.

The Council will hear in person or by his counsel, solicitor or agent any person who claims that his land will be prejudicially affected by the by-law and who applies to be heard.

Dated at the Town of Vaughan this 29th day of January, 1979.

F.G. Jackman
 Clerk

We need a creative partnership among teachers, government and local communities to plan for the modification of our education system. The notion of working together has become almost a cliché, a common call issued by politicians when faced with difficult problems. However, in this case it is absolutely essential. Confrontation is certainly not the answer.

The declining enrollment trend has focused attention upon a number of concerns about our school system. In a recent speech in Ottawa, the Minister of Education reported on public reaction to the situation.

is inflation which is the major cause of rising costs in the school system, and since income tax is more directly related to ability to pay than is property tax, it may make more sense to increase the portion of education costs to be borne by the income tax. Our Caucus will be giving serious consideration to changes of this kind.

(2) A second important issue is class size: We have reservations about the Jackson Report's recommendation that teacher associations make elimination of large class sizes a priority in their negotiations — that teachers insist that a maximum size of class be set. Many people will view this approach, rightly or wrongly, as an attempt by teachers to protect their jobs regardless of lower enrollment.

(3) The third issue is "merit criteria for teachers": One of the more controversial recommendations advanced by the Jackson Report and one which undoubtedly will not find favor with teacher organizations is the proposal that permanent teaching certificates be replaced by five year renewable certificates. The successful completion of academic courses and the demonstration of satisfactory performance on the job would be the criteria for renewal. The rub, of course, is who does the evaluation and on what basis?

O.S.S.T.F. President, Margaret Wilson, has expressed the fear that some schools may use such a guideline to fire teachers after the five-year period. However, merit has to be an important criterion, and in a period of restraint, when the system is being scaled down, there must be a way to ensure that the most effective and proficient teachers are retained.

Enlightened teachers surely recognize the responsibility they have to students in this matter. If there is a firm, effective and fair way to introduce the "merit" principle, ideally it is the teachers who could suggest the best method.

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