

Province fights illiteracy here

By NORAH STONER
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The Ontario Government is assisting in the efforts to reduce the illiteracy rate in this province.

An estimated 250,000 men and women in Ontario lack core literacy skills and its estimated one million people are functionally illiterate.

(Core literacy is considered the basic ability to read and write while functional illiteracy means the skills are less than those expected of a Grade 9 student.)

This year the province is spending more than \$40 million to support a wide range of educational

programs that have a literacy component, said Skills Development Minister Alvin Curling in a recent speech.

He added many of these programs such as Futures and Ontario Basic Skills, are delivered by the Skills Development Ministry through the community colleges.

The \$20 million Basic Skills program began a year ago. It has provided almost 16,000 people with the literacy and numeracy skills required to enter the workplace.

Mr. Curling said the many community and volunteer agencies that have been training people to read and write for a number of

years are the first footsoldiers in the war against illiteracy.

"These agencies continue to be indispensable partners in this battle and this year the Province of Ontario will provide \$5 million in funds to community groups," he said.

Although the Skills Development Ministry has been designated as the central ministry in addressing the literacy challenge, other government ministries are also making important advances.

For example, school boards are encouraged by the Ministry of Education to offer literacy programs with about \$6.5 million in

funds made available annually to boards offering adult basic education.

It's recognized that illiteracy is widespread amongst inmates of correctional institutions. The Ministry of Correctional Services is assessing the literacy skills of inmates and is offering training to these individuals.

Mr. Curling, who spent 10 years on the board of World Literacy of Canada, believes Ontario's most important resource is its people.

"No industrial strategy or economic plan can succeed if we do not have the trained manpower and womanpower to carry them

out. With the technological advances that are touching every workplace in the province people require ever-increasing levels of skills and all of those skills are predicated on literacy."

"With the changes that free trade may bring, people require the ability to learn new jobs and learn them quickly...to transport their skills from one job opportunity to another. And this can only be possible if they are fully literate." Mr. Curling said.

He added the concerted will of not only government but all the people of Ontario is required to achieve our goal of full literacy.



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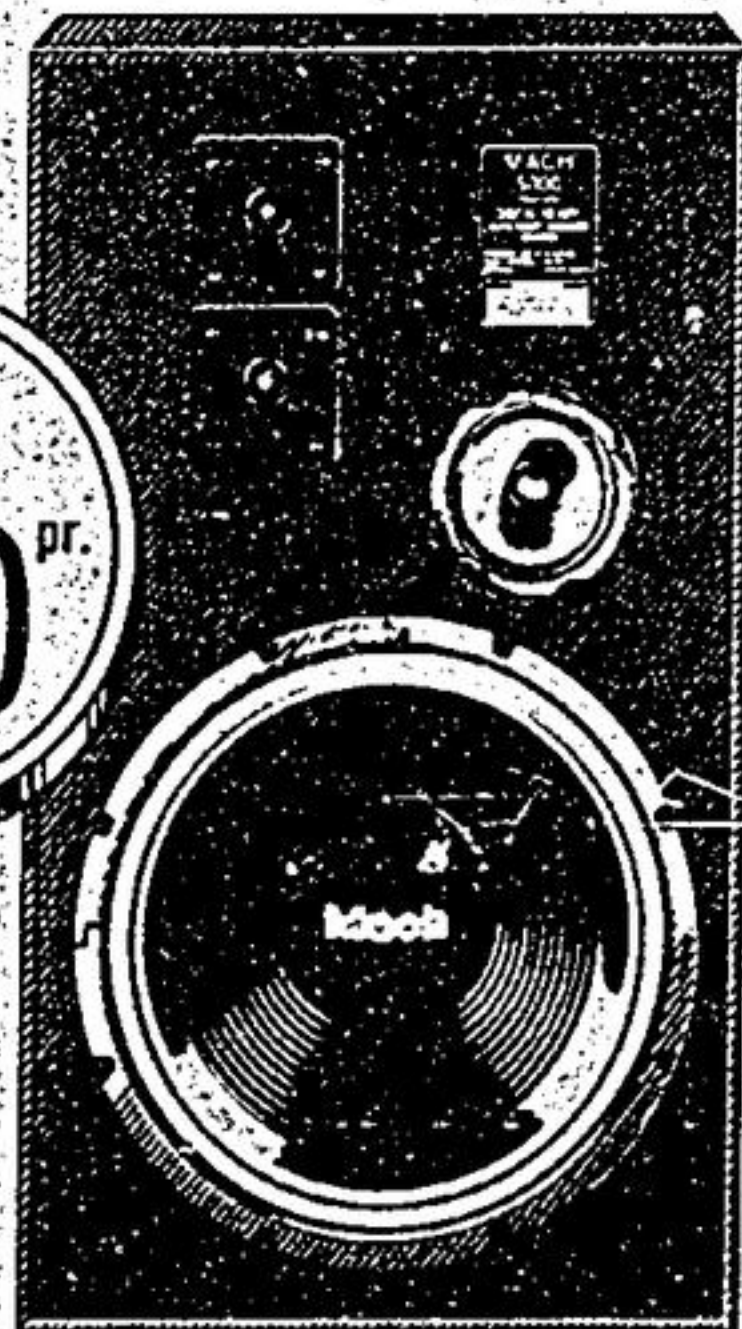
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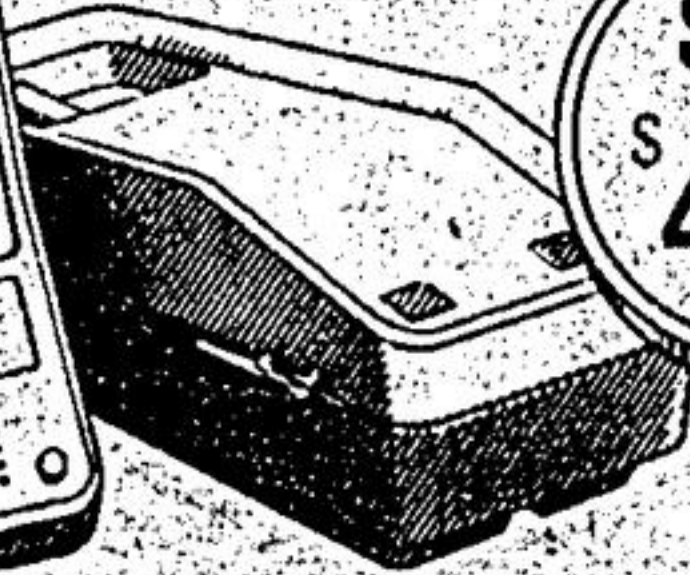


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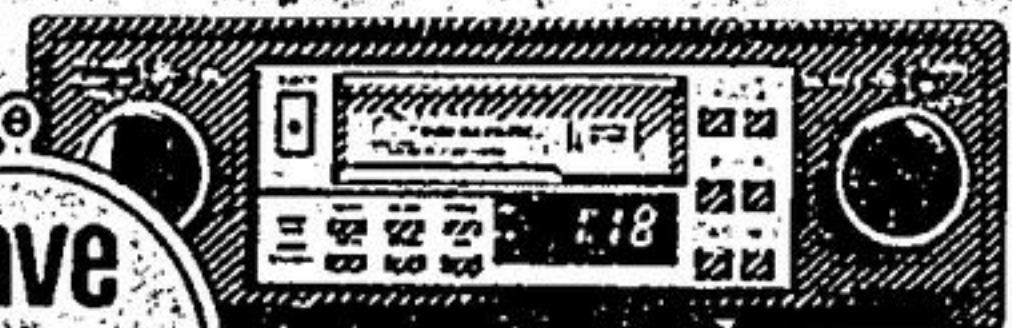


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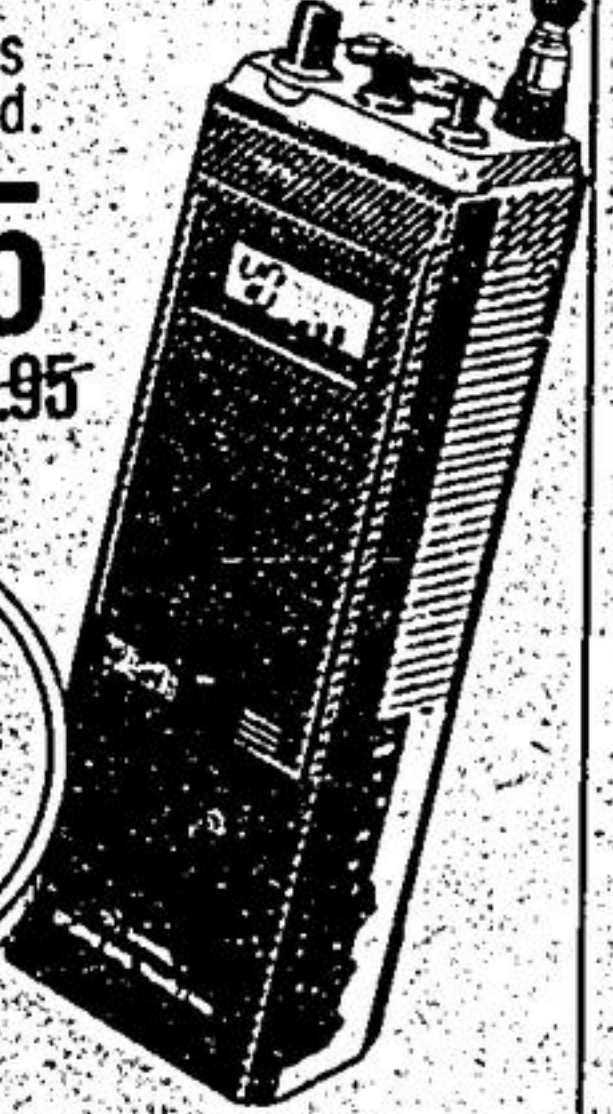
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