

Education

York residents tell commission to get back to basics

The Royal Commission on Learning was told to return to the basics of education but not take away any of the extras already in place. The commission stopped over in York Region Monday, and the five-member board listened to recommendations from par-

ents, students, teachers and special interest groups, all wanting to be heard among the thousands of voices speaking on this tour of the province. bying to ensure their children's programs are not touched by a revamping of the provincial education system.

A longer school day and school year is touted by the York Region Board of Education as one way to allow students to compete on a global level. In addition to the basics, schools are asked to teach arts, AIDS education, physical education, and there's not enough class time, said board superintendent Bill MacKillican.

The board would like to see at least 50 day added to the current school year in Ontario. Meanwhile, parents are lo-

Margaret Brock spoke in favor of the Arts York program offered at Unionville High School.

"All kids need language and math but we want to see the arts as one of the basics"

Estelle Payne of the area chapter of the Association for Bright Children wants to keep the gifted programs at York Region schools intact.

Resident Hugh McKeown, also a principal in North York,

The students I teach need food. Second, they need to be loved on the weekend. Then maybe I can teach them how to read.

- Nelson Dyck

suggested that the curriculum not be based on the experiences and writings and European men but rather take into account the culture, language and race of all students.

"This will not add more to the curriculum, there's no cost. This is an issue of attitude change," McKeown said.

The local chapter of the Congress of Black Women of Canada wants the province to ensure teachers and guidance staff are given enough training to ensure all students are treated equally.

Spokesman Ettie Rutherford proposed an "alternative school for black students" that would have an all-black staff.

The congress is in favor of teaching children more at an earlier age, the same suggestion forwarded by parent Jackie Cousins.

"Kindergarten and Grade 1 kids have the capacity to learn more than they do in school. If we expect more we get more," Cousins said.

Thornhill student Jules Bedeau promoted mandatory testing and uniform teaching to the commission.

Bedeau, the York Secondary Catholic Student Association president, wants the school board to inform students of all rules, such as the safe schools policy, before they are enacted. Students should have an active voice in their education, he said.

Sutton resident and teacher Nelson Dyck simply wants to understand the information coming from the school boards and the ministry.

"Our entire system has been permeated with jargon," he said reading a convoluted message to teachers regarding learning outcomes.

But children need something before they even walk into a school, Dyck said.

"The students I teach need food. Second, they need to be loved on the weekend. Then maybe I can teach them how to read."

The commission was appointed in May and started hearing public views in September.

It will wrap up Dec. 15 in Toronto.

- Julie Caspersen

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