

Ontario Parent Council

Annual Report

1995 - 1996

March 12, 1997

The Honourable John Snobelen
Minister of Education and Training
22nd Floor, Mowat Block
900 Bay Street
Toronto, Ontario
M7A 1L2

Dear Mr. Snobelen:

On behalf of the Ontario Parent Council, we are pleased to submit the Council's annual report for the period of July 1, 1995 to June 30, 1996.

The Council's mandate is to provide advice from a parental perspective to the Minister of Education and Training on matters relating to elementary and secondary education. The Council also promotes the involvement of parents in the education system.

In the past year, the Council has devoted its efforts to many of the changes and challenges in education. The Ontario Parent Council has consistently sought legislation since 1994 to entrench the role of parents in the Education Act. While we are pleased that school councils started to become a reality in the province this past year, we strongly encourage you to proceed with legislation to strengthen the current policy for parental involvement as set out in the Policy/Program Memorandum #122.

While you are considering changes to the education system, the Council would again invite you to utilize its potential in providing you with its experience and knowledge of parental concerns and issues.

This report provides details about many of the activities of the Ontario Parent Council and its members. We wish to express our thanks to the Council members and staff for their dedication to improving the quality of education in this province.

Sincerely,

Lynn Beyak
Immediate Past Chair
Ontario Parent Council

Richard Zelinka
Immediate Past Vice-Chair
Ontario Parent Council

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The Year in Brief

The Ontario Parent Council represents the interests of parents at the provincial level by advising the Minister of Education and Training on issues of concern to parents. During the year, the Council met twice with the Minister, John Snobelen, and once with the Parliamentary Assistant for Education, Toni Skarica. Between July 1, 1995 and June 30, 1996, the Council met as a group 8 times; in addition, the members of the Council Executive and the Communications, Education Policy, School Councils and Parent Involvement Committees met regularly to evaluate progress and plan future activities.

Members of the Council served on Ministry committees involved in the development of material for the implementation of school councils, in the development of assessment policies and a model program for young people expelled from school. In addition, the Council participated on the inter-ministerial Gender Equity in Education Network.

In 1995-96, the Council worked for the entire term without its full intended complement of 18 members. Notably, no member representing the Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations was appointed to the Council. The Vice-Chair, Richard Zelinka, performed the duties of Acting Chair until the appointment of Lynn Beyak as Chair in February 1996.

In its work, the Ontario Parent Council showed itself to be an important voice for parents at the provincial level.

Activities

Communications

Council members devoted a great deal of their time and energy to outreach activities across the province and welcomed opportunities to meet and speak with parents, educators and media representatives. Because of strong public interest, the media gave considerable attention to the subject of educational reform. Council members were interviewed by reporters and writers from many of the province's daily newspapers and radio and television, as well as from national magazines and other publications.

In 1995-96, the activities of the Communications Committee were directed not only at communicating with parents, but also at encouraging parents to provide input to the Council.

Distributing information to parents through the schools continues to be a challenge for the Council. Despite an interim distribution protocol with Trustee and Supervisory Officer Organizations for the distribution of the February and June 1996 Ontario Parent Council newsletters, Council members noted that the distribution home to parents was still an issue, as some directors and individual principals chose not to distribute the newsletters, to distribute them at a later date, or to distribute them accompanied by additional material of their choice.

The Council has not been able to get agreement on a permanent distribution protocol, despite many attempts to do so; therefore, the Ontario Parent Council has asked the Minister to make a change to the Education Act which would enable individual school councils, as part of their communication strategies, to make decisions about distributing material to parents in their schools.

Education Policy Issues

The Ontario Parent Council communicated parent input on several issues to the Minister and/or prepared responses to several issues. It developed a series of key issue statements on the following topics to provide an overview of the Council's positions for the public: Curriculum & Standardized Testing, Junior Kindergarten, College of Teachers, Parental Involvement, School Council Implementation, Secondary School Reform and Education Funding Cuts.

In order to allow for the equitable distribution of funds to all regions of the province and among all School Boards, the Council also recommended to the Minister of Education that education be funded provincially from general revenues. It further recommended that, if this were done, province-wide negotiations of teacher contracts should be instituted to reduce the costs of negotiating collective agreements at the local level.

School Councils

According to Policy/Program Memorandum (PPM) #122, all School Boards in Ontario were to create a policy around the establishment of school councils in their schools and to have school councils in place by June 1996. Since it was clear that the contents of PPM 122 were not being consistently shared with parents, and that many parents were unaware of its stipulations, the Ontario Parent Council undertook to communicate with parents to raise their awareness, thereby increasing their participation in the process of setting up school councils in their children's schools, and in creating policies at the Board level.

In August 1995, the Council met with the newly appointed Minister of Education and Training, John Snobelen, to clarify the future of PPM 122, and to suggest that any changes to the policy should include decision-making functions for school councils in many of the matters where the PPM indicated that their function should be advisory. Both Council newsletters, published in February and June 1996, dealt with the school council issue, outlining the provisions of PPM 122, and giving parents an idea of what school councils should look like, what they should do, and how they should function. A questionnaire was published in the February newsletter, asking parents for feedback on how the process was proceeding in their communities. The Federation of Catholic Parent Teacher Associations of Ontario (FCPTAO) also agreed to circulate the questionnaire to its members.

Council members worked countless volunteer hours with the Ministry's School Council Implementation Network to create a handbook on how to set up school councils, followed by a manual detailing how they should run. Many members participated in Ministry training sessions regarding schools councils. In all instances, Council members worked with their parent counterparts representing the Federation of Catholic Parent Teacher Associations of Ontario, the Ontario Federation of Home & School Associations and the *Fédération des associations de parents francophones de l'Ontario* to encourage Ministry officials and other stakeholders to include parents in the process and language, as well as the design of training activities, relating to the development of the Handbook and Manual. At the close of the school year, most Boards had complied with PPM 122, although there were still Boards in the province which had no school council policy in place. The Ontario Parent Council continues to press the Minister for legislation requiring each school to have a school council, and clearly define the decision-making functions.

Rights and Responsibilities

In its study of Ontario education, "For the Love of Learning", the 1994 [Royal Commission on Learning](#) recommended the development of a Charter of Rights and Responsibilities for both parents and students. While this recommendation was a positive step, the development of such a Charter would present many challenges. In the meantime, the Ontario Parent Council believes there is a need to have a commonly understood statement of rights and responsibilities for parents and students.

Therefore, the Council commissioned a study on the rights and responsibilities of parents and students which included a review of international, national and provincial literature, existing school board policies on parent and student rights and responsibilities in Ontario, and input from the three parent Federations in Ontario. The consultant hired by the Council prepared a report which included the results of the research, a detailed bibliography, and drafts of statements of the rights and responsibilities of parents and students. This background report was forwarded to the Minister.

The Council furthered this work by inviting Directors of Education to submit copies of statements of rights and responsibilities currently being used in their jurisdictions.

Additional consultation with parents and students is required before the Council's report is finalized.

Briefs to the Legislative Committee Reviewing

Bills 30 and 31

In December 14, 1995, the Government introduced Bill 30, An Act to Establish the Education Quality & Accountability Office and Bill 31, An Act to Establish the Ontario College of Teachers. The Ontario Parent Council supported both of these Bills and presented briefs to the Standing Committee on Social Development reviewing the Bills.

The Council viewed Bill 31 as an important means of improving the accountability of the educational system in the province of Ontario. In particular, the Council supported the proposal that the Governing Council of the [Ontario College of Teachers](#) be composed of 31 persons, 17 of whom would be members of the College and 14 who would be persons appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council to represent the public interest. The Council supported the recommendations of the report *The Privilege of Professionalism* prepared by the Ontario College of Teachers Implementation Committee that there be three parent representatives on the Governing Council nominated by the Ontario Parent Council.

The Council also supported the position that the Governing Council and its Committees should reflect the balance between those directly involved in the provision of education and the people they serve. To that end, the Ontario Parent Council was very supportive of the recommendation that the public be represented on all Committees to ensure this objective would be met. The Council was encouraged to note that, when passed, the Act retained the membership balance of 17-14 and the participation of public appointees on the various committees of the Governing Council.

Ontario students are currently tested at the provincial, national and international levels. These tests enable educators, politicians and parents, among others, to review the general performance of the education system, as well as to assess the prospects for success for our students. Bill 30 set out the terms of reference for the establishment of the [Education Quality and Accountability Office](#) charged with the overall responsibility of evaluating the quality and effectiveness of elementary and secondary school education, including the developing, administering and marking of tests for school students in Ontario.

The Ontario Parent Council supported the establishment of the Education Quality and Accountability Office since the Council felt that improvements were required in the way testing and test results were communicated and explained to parents. In particular, the Council stressed that parents should be advised, on an annual basis, of the various testing initiatives undertaken by the province, including a list and description of the tests, objectives, extent of samples and dates for release of results.

Both Bill 30 and 31 received Royal Assent in June 1996.

Members of the Ontario Parent Council 1995-96 Term

Lynn Beyak is the Chair of the Ontario Parent Council. Lynn lives in Fort Frances and is owner of a real estate and consulting company. She has been actively involved in education since 1982, first as a member and delegate of the West Rainy River District Home and School Association and now with the Fort Frances Rainy River Board of Education where she has served as Vice Chair of the Board and Chair of the Education Committee. Lynn and her husband Tony spent 12 years in Rainy River as owners of Windy Bay Lodge and have a son attending Ryerson University and a son attending Fort Frances High School.

Gisèle Acheson is a community occupational therapist living in Navan. She has two children in the secondary and the elementary systems. She has long been involved in the École Saint-Hugues and the École secondaire catholique Garneau Parent Teacher Association committees. Gisèle is past chair of the Ottawa-Carleton Roman Catholic French Language School Board's umbrella parent association and now serves as a School Council parent member at her daughters' schools.

Kathy Anstett lives in Mississauga and has been actively involved in parent associations in Nova Scotia and Ontario. She has been Secretary of the Clifton Parents' Association for the past two years, is currently on the Board of Directors of the Cooksville - Munden Park Homeowners Association and is active in other community organizations. Kathy recently returned to college part-time and is studying for her CGA. In September 1995, her four children will all be attending school.

Susan Bistrovich resides in Grimsby and is an accountant with Dofasco Inc. in Hamilton. As a parent, she has long been involved in her two children's elementary and secondary school parent associations and on their executives. Susan has been a director of the Federation of Catholic Parent-Teacher Associations of Ontario since 1992. Susan continues to be an active participant in the Niagara Region, where her children attend school, in the CPTA for Lincoln-Welland.

Gabrielle Blais lives in Orléans and is a manager at the National Archives of Canada. She has been involved in educational issues for over five years as a school volunteer and chair of the Parents' Association, a school representative in various community associations, and a member of the Board of Directors of the Fédération des associations de parents francophones de l'Ontario. The mother of three children who attend l'École élémentaire publique Jeanne-Sauvé in Orléans, Ms Blais has a keen interest in curriculum issues, as well as in the social challenges currently facing the school system.

Beverly Boyd resides in Wawa and is a Senior Payroll Clerk with a newly established company, Jager Strandboard Limited Partnership. Prior to this, she was the Executive Director of the North Algoma Industrial Training Organization. She has been an active member of the Sir James Dunn Home & School Association for a number of years as well as the Chairperson for CHADWIC Home, the local women's shelter. Beverly has two daughters attending Michipicoten High School and one son attending Sir James Dunn Public School.

Peter Farlinger is from Desboro. He is a director of a computer software company and is a member of the Sullivan Community School Parent Advisory Committee and the Assembly of Parent Groups. He volunteers at Sullivan Community School two half-days a week, and coaches local baseball and hockey teams. He has two children in the elementary school system. Peter was Chair of the Ontario Parent Council during its 1994-95 term.

Schuster Gindin is a multi-media artist who lives in Toronto. She has two sons, and has been an involved parent since chairing the Board of her older son's daycare. She was later co-chair of their elementary school parents' association for three years, where she co-chaired the Equity Committee and contributed to developing a school equity policy. She continues her involvement on committees in the high school and the junior high her sons attend.

Lorraine Kenny, Sioux Lookout, is the program director for Equay-Wuk (Women's Group), which provides training programs and support services to women in 23 isolated communities in Northern Ontario. As part of her job, Lorraine trains facilitators for the Raising the Children program offered by her organization. She serves on the board of her local Friendship Centre and has four children. Two are in secondary school and two are in elementary school, in French immersion classes.

M. D. Khalid, lives in Oakville and is a senior economic advisor at Ontario Hydro. He has four children, two attending high school and two enrolled in elementary school. As a parent, he is actively involved with the ISNA Islamic School Board, and has been its treasurer since 1990.

Mary Margaret Laing is a nutritionist from Cambridge who works in health care communications. She has three children attending elementary and secondary schools in both public and separate boards in Waterloo Region. She has been an active member of the St. Ambrose School Community Association for the last four years, and served on the Waterloo Region's Social Resources Council for five years, chairing in 1993. Mary Margaret is serving on a committee of the Waterloo Region Separate School Board, looking at the implementation of school councils in their schools.

Carole Lamoureux is from Chelmsford and has been active in many parent teacher committees. She is also a Board member of the *Service Familial de Sudbury*. Much of her volunteer work has involved community development and educational resources. Carole is coordinator of a Seniors' Promotion and Awareness Campaign sponsored by the Canadian Mental Health Association. Three of her children are in the elementary and secondary school systems. She has a son and a daughter at University.

Valerie Mills-Daly is a Registered Nurse in Kenora and has three school age children. She has long been active in the local Pine Grove Parents' Committee and more recently in the Lakewood Intermediate School Parents' Committee. She is the past chair of the Kenora Children's Concert Series and is on the Board of Elders at Knox United Church.

Sonia Reid-Cudjoe is a community resource consultant with the Centre for Human Resource Development in Toronto. She is a member of the Black Educators' Working Group and the Seneca College Parents' Advisory Council. In 1991-92, she was president of the Parents' Advisory Council of the Jane-Finch Concerned Citizens' Organization. Sonia has one child in elementary school and two children in secondary school.

Catharine Shanahan, from Windsor, has two children in elementary school. Her local school involvement included being co-president of Hugh Beaton Home and School Association for the last five years. She is the Executive Director of Family Respite Services, Windsor-Essex, an agency providing services to families of children with special needs.

Barbara Smith lives in Markham and is founder of the Quality Education Network. She is a member of the York Region Task Force on Speech and Language Services, and secretary of Scouts Canada, York Rouge District. In addition, Barbara is Public Relations Director of the Learning Disabilities Association of York Region. She has two children in elementary school and one child in secondary school.

Richard Zelinka, of London, is an urban and regional planning consultant with three children in the secondary school system. He is past chair of the Banting Home and School Association and past president of the Lord Roberts Parent Teacher Association. He was a volunteer ESL teacher for two years and PTA liaison person for the London Board of Education for seven years. Richard is the Vice-Chair of the Ontario Parent Council.

Financial Report

Financial report for the period April 1, 1995 to March 31, 1996

Budget:	\$495,200
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Expenditures:*	
Salaries and wages	\$ 94,485
Transport and communications	\$ 87,088
Services and rentals	\$ 82,998
Supplies and equipment	\$ 66,211
Total:	\$330,782

Balance:	\$164,418
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* Statement of expenditures was provided by the Ministry of Education and Training.
