

Ontario Parent Council Annual Report

July 1, 1994 - June 30, 1995

March 7, 1996

The Honourable John Snobelen
Minister of Education & Training
900 Bay Street
22nd Floor, Mowat Block
Toronto, Ontario

Dear Mr. Snobelen:

On behalf of the members of the Ontario Parent Council, I am pleased to submit the Council's Annual Report for the period July 1, 1994 to June 30, 1995.

The mandate of the Council is to provide advice to the Minister of Education and Training on issues related to elementary and secondary school education. In support of this mandate, the Council is expected to initiate a number of activities in order to enhance its ability to advise the Minister. Those activities include:

- providing an access point for parent interest,
- pursuing independent research projects,
- establishing liaison committees,
- organizing regional forums,
- developing parent communication strategies between the home and school.

The efforts of the Council in support of its mandate have been substantial and we are particularly gratified by the increasing awareness and acceptance of the important role that parents play, both in the education of their children, and in their schools.

This Report will provide details on many of the activities of the Council and the contributions of its members. As immediate Past Chair, I thank all of the members and our staff for their support and dedication.

Sincerely,

Peter Farlinger
Immediate Past Chair
Ontario Parent Council

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Members of the Ontario Parent Council are working to ensure that all parents have the opportunity to participate in a meaningful way in their children's education.

The Council represents parents' interests at the provincial level by advising the Minister of Education and Training on issues of concern to parents. During the year, Council members or the Chair met three times with the Minister and twice with the Associate Minister. The Council met as a group 10 times.

Members of the Council served on ministry committees involved in establishing school councils and developing curriculum, standards and assessment.

They also devoted considerable time and effort to outreach across the province.

In their activities, both locally and at the provincial level, Council members had three priorities: to assist in the formation of school councils, to help develop and implement a common curriculum and standards, and to communicate with parents and educators.

The Council is very pleased to report that significant progress was made in each of these areas.

School Councils

Parent Council recommendations

In its Report on the Establishment of School Parent Councils, published in July 1994, the Council recommended mandatory school councils which would involve parents in decisions about how schools are run and their day-to-day activities. The councils would be made up of parents, teachers, students and others in the community.

More than 10,000 copies of the report were distributed. A summary of the Council's recommendations, available in English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese and Italian, was also sent to parents across the province.

Royal Commission on Learning

A copy of the Report on the *Establishment of School Parent Councils* was provided to the Royal Commission on Learning for its consideration and the Council met with the Commission to discuss educational issues, including parental involvement..

The Royal Commission, in its report released in January 1995, recommended that the Minister of Education and Training mandate the establishment of school-community councils with members drawn from parents, schools and the community.

Soon after the Royal Commission released its report, the Council issued a press release in support of the Commission's recommendations. In the release, the Council Chair, Peter Farlinger, called on parents and principals to immediately begin setting up school councils. He noted that some schools in the province already have councils in which parents are actively involved.

"Their contributions are valuable, meaningful and have a positive outcome on their children's education. Every community needs to have a chance to participate in the same way," he said.

School councils become a reality

The Minister of Education and Training announced in February 1995 that he would introduce legislation requiring each school to establish councils, starting September 1995. In April, the Ministry of Education and Training issued Policy/Program Memorandum 122 directing school boards to develop policies for establishing school councils. Policy/Program Memorandum 122 states that, by June 1996, every school in Ontario must have a council composed of parents, teachers, the principal, a non-teaching staff member, another person from the community, and, for secondary schools, a student. Each council must be chaired by a parent and parents must make up the majority of members.

Members of school councils will be consulted on many of the matters that directly affect their children's education, such as:

- curriculum goals and priorities;
- codes of student behaviour;
- school budget priorities;
- extra-curricular activities;
- the school year calendar; and
- the selection of principals.

With the help of Council members, ministry staff are preparing a handbook for school councils with advice on how to get started, set agendas and conduct meetings.

Curriculum and Standards

The Council believes that there should be a clear process, both locally and at the provincial level, which would enable parents to be involved in assessing curriculum and standards. Parents should have a say about what their children are taught and the standards they are expected to meet.

In 1995, parents had an opportunity to comment on draft versions of the provincial Common Curriculum Grades 1-9, and language and math standards. The Common Curriculum and the standards describe what students should know and be able to do upon completing Grades 3, 6 and 9. They were to be introduced in the schools in September 1995.

Council members served on ministry committees to develop the Common Curriculum and standards for the public school system. As participants on the Innovation Fund Committee, they are helping to ensure that the curriculum is carried out effectively. Working with other committee members representing the Federation of Women Teachers, they developed a proposal to allocate funds for teacher training which was accepted by the ministry.

Parents have generally not been involved in decisions involving curriculum at the local level. This situation is expected to change in 1996 with the creation of school councils. The councils will be able to advise principals and school boards on curriculum goals and priorities.

Communications and Outreach

Council members devote a great deal of their time and energy to outreach activities. Many of them serve on local school and regional committees which are working to establish school councils, develop curriculum and standards and advise on report cards and assessment policy.

Speaking engagements

Members welcome opportunities to meet and speak with parents, educators and media representatives. In the course of the year, they spoke with more than 120 groups about Council activities, the formation of school councils and related matters. These groups included parent advisory councils, home and school and parent-teacher associations, school boards, trustees' associations, principals, directors of education, teachers' federations and community service organizations.

Media coverage

Because of strong public interest, the media has given considerable attention to the subject of educational reform. Council members were interviewed by reporters and writers from many of the province's daily newspapers, magazines and other publications and radio and television.

First newsletter published

Early in 1995, the Council published its first annual report and, in February 1995, the first issue of its newsletter. The newsletter is the main vehicle to reach parents in every community in the province. It provides them with information which assists them to become informed participants in their children's education.

The first issue featured articles about school councils, the Royal Commission on Learning, the Common Curriculum, Grades 1-9 and the Council and its members.

Nearly two million copies, in English and in French, were sent to directors of education for distribution to schools.

The Council received hundreds of calls from parents who had read the newsletter and wanted to obtain more information or comment on educational reforms, particularly the establishment of school councils.

Council members met with representatives of trustee and supervisory officer associations in order to develop a protocol that will ensure distribution of the Council's newsletters.

Thunder Bay forum

In order to represent them effectively, the Council seeks the views of parents from all parts of the Province. On April 28 and 29, 1995, the Council held meetings and public forums in Thunder Bay to hear from parents in Northwestern Ontario.

Nearly 100 people attended the forum held at Agnew H. Johnston School. The event was publicized across Northern Ontario by CBC Radio. Council members also met parents and educators in 11 other communities through the teleconferencing and videoconferencing services provided by Contact North.

As well, they heard presentations by the education directors of the Nishnawbee-Aski Nation and the Union of Ontario Indians who spoke about native education in the province and the challenges of providing native students with a culturally appropriate education.

The forums succeeded in bringing together parents from many parts of the North and the Council hopes to hold similar events in other parts of the province.

Members of the Ontario Parent Council

The 18 members of the Ontario Parent Council come from all over the province and from many different backgrounds. They are united in their belief that parents can make a valuable contribution to the educational system. Members of the Council are appointed by the Minister of Education and Training. To be eligible, they must have children in elementary or secondary schools and a strong interest and involvement in education or community affairs.

Gisèle Acheson is an occupational therapist from Navan. She is past president of the Parent Association of the Ottawa-Carleton Roman Catholic French-language School Board. Gisèle has children in both the elementary and secondary school systems. She has long been involved in the École Saint-Hugues Parent Teacher Association of which she was president for two years and is also involved with the PTA of Garneau Catholic Secondary School. **Susan Bistrovich** is an accountant at Dofasco Inc. in Hamilton, and has been a director of the Federation of Catholic Parent-Teacher Associations of Ontario since 1992. As a parent, Susan has long been active in the C.P.T.A. at St. Joseph Elementary where her son is in his final year. She is also becoming involved in the parent association of her daughter's secondary school in Grimsby as it moves in the direction of a council.

Cecilia Bruno, of Sault Ste. Marie, is a financial analyst with the Ontario Lottery Corporation. She is active in the St. Paul School Catholic Parent Teacher Association and is a member of the Sault College Accounting Advisory Committee. She has also served as Treasurer for the Sault Community and Career Information Centre and is on the Big Sister Association and the Sault Ste. Marie Chamber of Commerce. She has one child in the elementary school system.

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.

Doug Gosling,⁴ Etobicoke, is a past president of the board of directors of the Catholic Children's Aid Society of Metropolitan Toronto. He has been a committed volunteer in several other organizations, including the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, the Etobicoke Olympium, and a workplace daycare centre. He has two children in elementary school.

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 from Cambridge, is a nutritionist 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.

Jacqueline Latta², a self-employed research consultant living in Toronto, has been a community activist for many years. She is a member of the Toronto Board of Education Race Relations Committee, Parental Involvement Committee and Bias in the Curriculum Advisory Council and is the co-chair of the International Languages Committee. She is also the chair of the Advisory Council of the Hillcrest Community Centre. Jacqueline was the first chair of the Ontario Parent Council. Her daughter is in junior high and her son is in elementary school.

Norma McGuire lives in Etobicoke and has been involved in home and school associations for 20 years. She is a former president of the Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations, and vice-chair of the Etobicoke Board of Health. She has also been a member of a number of advisory committees of the Ministry of Education and Training. As a volunteer, she is involved in many youth-related health and social issues at the local, provincial and national levels.

Glenn Meadows lives in North Bay and is a vocational rehabilitation counsellor. He has a Master's degree in Education from the University of Toronto and is the chair of a local school's parent committee. Glenn is involved in various community activities and has two children in both the elementary and secondary school systems.

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.

Francesca Piredda is a communications advisor in Ottawa. She is president of the *Fédération des associations de parents francophones de l'Ontario*. She was also president of *École publique Francojeunesse* Parent Teacher Association for three years and vice-president of the *Regroupement des associations de parents des écoles publiques d'Ottawa-Carleton*. Her son is in the elementary school system.

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.

Financial Statement

Financial report for the period April 1, 1994 to March 31, 1995

Budget		\$511,400
Expenditures³		
Salaries and wages	\$123,511	
Transport and communications	107,617	
Services and rentals	99,144	
Supplies and equipment ⁴	154,373	
<i>Total Expenditures</i>		\$484,645
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Balance		\$26,755
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Footnotes

1. Doug Gosling resigned from the Council on January 3, 1995.
2. Jacqueline Latter resigned from the Council on November 20, 1994.
3. Statement of expenditures was provided by the Ministry of Education and Training.
4. This category of expenses includes the printing of reports and publications of the Ontario Parent Council.