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FOREWORD

Almost 18 months after it began its work, the Commission for the Estates General on Education is presenting the people of Québec with a project for the renewal of the education system. The onus is now on the Minister of Education, who has already been apprised of this project, to draw up a plan in accordance with the government's orientations and deadlines.

Two Phases and a Change of Mandate

It could be said that our work involved two phases. Initially, we were asked to take stock of the situation of education in Québec and to analyze its main elements on the basis of public input. In January 1996, after the hearings, which were exceptionally well attended in all regions of Québec, we published *The State of Education in Québec*. In this report, we gave an account of the views expressed at the hearings and, to open the way for further debate, we formulated a number of questions intended for those individuals and organizations who would be taking part in the regional conferences. These questions dealt with issues we considered to be priorities.

The second phase in the Commission's work began when the Commission's mandate was modified: we were asked to set out, in a final report to be published in the fall, the goals and actions that should become our priorities for the future in education in Québec. This was to be the focus of the regional and provincial conferences. Information sessions and public forums were held in each region in preparation for 16 regional conferences, which brought together representatives of the respective regional organizations. In keeping with our mandate, in June 1996, we published a summary of the proceedings. Given the distinctive characteristics and autonomy of the First Nations, the First Nations Education Council held its own conferences, which the Commission members were invited to attend. The Council then joined other social and educational partners for the provincial conference.

Finally, the provincial conference, held in early September 1996, focused on a small number of questions that had been reformulated either to shed further light on complex issues or to break any remaining deadlocks.

The Originality of Our Approach

The challenge facing the members of this Commission was different from the one addressed by the Royal Commission of Inquiry on Education, which gave us the Parent Report in the 1960s. Our task was not to build from the ground up, but to renovate.

Furthermore, we were appointed to the Commission, not because we were experts in education, but because we came from different walks of life and this diversity was likely to ensure that the voices of different sectors of society would be heard. Our various backgrounds are significant in this respect only.

We opened the debate to the broadest range of social and educational players and opted for the most straightforward approach, in terms of both the questions we framed and the public nature of the discussions. We are extremely pleased with the public's response to our invitation.

We also looked at existing studies and, more particularly, those dealing with educational reform in western countries. We conducted our own research on less documented aspects of the education system and drew on analyses made available to us by the ministère de l'Éducation (MEQ). Above all, we strove to reach a collective conclusion based on these references and on the views expressed in thousands of submissions.

Continuity and Change

This report continues in the same vein as *The State of Education in Québec*. It even reiterates the same views on a number of points: the need to redefine the educational mission; the responsibilities of individuals and institutions in supporting and supervising students; the importance of updating the concept of equal opportunity to education, even early childhood education, to fit today's realities; and the need to reinstate a true vocational and technical education branch and to incorporate a continuing education perspective into activities at all levels of education. The report also outlines the complex tasks that follow from these views: for example, it is high time that we restructure the curricula, and adopt a comprehensive policy for early childhood services and one for continuing education. We also feel that we must significantly change the way in which teaching institutions interact with other levels of the education system and with local communities. We must reorganize university education beyond our stated goals. We must learn to assess the performance of our educational institutions in a more considered and responsible way. We must spare no effort to provide our teachers with urgently needed professional development. We must harmonize corresponding programs at different levels of education in order to provide students with a more integrated education. In short, we must offer all students, both young people and adults, the best conditions for success.

However, if our schools are to play a key role in strengthening the fabric of our society by providing students with equal opportunities and a wealth of knowledge, if they are to teach values and produce responsible citizens, then they must break with

traditional views of schooling, existing educational structures, the current division of responsibilities and certain acquired privileges.

Scope of the Report

This report* analyzes the challenges facing the school of tomorrow and identifies the attendant priority actions. Whatever action we take will be determined by our educational mission, which is presented here as an inclusive project, with everything this implies both for the classroom and for the education system as a whole. This is indeed an ambitious project, but it is one we share with the great majority of those who helped us conceive it.

Signatures

Robert Bisailon <i>Joint Chair</i>	Lucie Demers <i>Joint Chair</i>
Nicolas Bélanger	André Caillé
Gary Caldwell	Paul Inchauspé
Élisabeth Le	Bernard Lemaire
Maria-Luisa Monreal	Élise Paré-Tousignant
Céline Saint-Pierre	Majella St-Pierre
Stéphanie Vennes	

* This report was unanimously adopted by the Commission members. However, on certain points, some members dissented from the majority position. Their views are given in Appendix I.

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1. A BROADER, RECENTRED EDUCATIONAL MISSION

We consider it appropriate to begin by sharing our thoughts and views concerning the educational mission. They derive from a detailed assessment of the successes and failures of the current system, provided by various social players along with their suggestions for improvement, and also from our own analysis of the social context, which has allowed us to identify the main trends that, in the present-day context, shape the educational demand.¹

Our expectations as to what schools should provide are closely linked not only to what we consider to be the basic store of knowledge needed to succeed in society, but also to the direction we would like to see society take. Faced with the current lack of focus of our social blueprint, we may be tempted to succumb to a feeling of powerlessness. At a time when the common values that normally bind society together are far from clear, when economic development, unduly influenced by market globalization and financial deregulation, seems to be out of our control, when paid employment is challenged as the chief means of social integration and distribution of wealth, when more and more people are being marginalized, and when the permanent nature of knowledge is increasingly seen as an illusion, it seems natural to ask the following question: what exactly is education meant to prepare students for? Students must learn to deal with uncertainty and change, obviously, but what else? We are used to seeing reforms of the education system carried out in conjunction with changes in society that reflect the wishes of the majority. For example, the reform that followed the publication of the Parent Report² was designed to contribute towards the goals of the Quiet Revolution and the modernization of Québec. Today, no society-wide consensus exists to serve as the foundation for an educational reform. On the other hand, **if the education sector is willing to move forward into a fog** which, incidentally, is not always as dense as it may seem at first, **it can serve as a beacon for other social institutions looking for their own points of reference.** In this connection, we share the idea expressed many times during the Estates General process, by a majority of major players in society and education, to the effect that the **upcoming educational reform must contribute to the emergence of a fairer, more democratic and more egalitarian society**, in the name of a greater humanity. The scope of the educational mission must remain broad, and it must not be confined within the narrow channels of transmission of knowledge or economic utilitarianism. In addition, we must **avoid burdening our schools with the responsibilities of other institutions**, be they families, businesses, cultural institutions, or religious groups.

It is no easy task to circumscribe the ultimate goals of education. Reality is always richer and more densely woven than the categories we attempt to impose on it. In

addition, the definition of certain concepts can vary widely from person to person. In this respect, the concept of instruction has negative connotations for a number of people, either because they associate instruction with basic skills or authoritarian, old-fashioned teaching methods, or because they are afraid that an emphasis on instruction will cause the development of skills and attitudes to be neglected. Instruction, for us, refers to a broad, modern conception of the cognitive functions of schools. Despite the difficulty of reaching agreement on the meaning of certain words, we believe that we must **clarify our overall educational goals**, and we propose that they be **classified under three main headings: to instruct, to socialize, and to provide qualifications**.

"To instruct" is the essential task of educational institutions. Schools, colleges and universities provide the space and time needed for the supervised learning that brings students into contact with the major fields of culture and various subjects, allowing them to acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes they will need to understand and transform their world and enter into a lifelong learning process. The exponential growth in and constant renewal of knowledge, and the need for us all, as members of a knowledge-based society, to deal with ever higher-level and ever more abstract knowledge, underline the importance of a reinforcement of cognitive-type skills. The mission of institutions of higher education also involves particular obligations connected with the development of knowledge and its application as part of their activities in the area of research and technological and scientific transfer. Although schools do not have a monopoly on instruction, any more than they do on socialization or qualifications, it is clear that as institutions devoted to formal education, they are the places where instruction can be most successfully undertaken.

"To socialize" is another overall goal of educational institutions. They must transmit the values that underlie our democratic society (equality, fundamental freedoms, respect for others, justice, cooperation, solidarity) and foster respect for common institutions, while remaining places in which value systems can be explored. They prepare students for the exercise of citizenship based on instruction in their rights and duties, compliance with a set of common rules and an open attitude towards diversity. Schools are also the melting pot for a democratic society, in the sense that they provide equal opportunities and contribute towards the attainment of social cohesion. For schools to neglect this segment of their mission would be to run the risk of themselves becoming agents of social dysfunction.

"To provide qualifications" is also an integral part of the educational mission. Institutions must gauge the needs of the labour market and the interests and abilities of their students, in both the youth and adult sectors, in order to provide training and retraining activities that will lead to a trade or profession. In so doing, they contribute towards the sustainable development of our society and the successful integration of individuals into the labour market, and provide students with the ability to adapt to the changes in job types and requirements that will inevitably occur.

Schools are not solely responsible for the attainment of these overall goals. Other organizations and institutions teach skills, impart knowledge, or provide cultural experiences on a daily basis. Families, the media, libraries, scientific and cultural leisure organizations, and unions all have a contribution to make towards the development of individuals. Of course, the fruit of these activities must be reinvested in the schools and, even more importantly, the various sites in which education is dispensed must be linked together to form an educational hub. Similarly, schools must rely on family, religious groups and community groups to assume more responsibility for providing instruction in values, religious commitment and good citizenship. Lastly, although the mission of schools is to provide qualifications, they cannot do so without taking the requirements of social and economic development and the increasingly difficult access to the job market into account. Exclusively academic programs will no longer suffice: schools will have to work in close collaboration with businesses, support groups for new workers and job seekers, and planning and development organizations.

The **ultimate goals** of education must, if they are to spark the changes we would like to see, **be reflected in pedagogical methods and the organization of the education system.** With respect to pedagogical methods, broad, balanced curricula and well-structured programs are needed to instil essential knowledge and turn schools into centres for learning and cultural initiation. This holds true at all levels of education. To avoid excluding or losing the interest of certain students, teaching methods and instructional materials will have to be better adapted to the learning needs and pace of each student. New information and communications technologies will be available as support tools, but will be of use only if they are integrated into the educational process in a rational manner. Student evaluation will be designed primarily to help students progress in addition to measuring their achievement, and will be used sparingly and not as the goal of the educational process. Overall, teaching methods will have to awaken students' desire to learn and commit themselves to their learning careers, rather than remain passive consumers of knowledge. Students who take responsibility for their learning, teachers who take responsibility for their teaching, and school principals who exercise educational leadership and create favourable surroundings for successful learning will be needed to implement the new requirements.

Schools introduce students to the world of knowledge; they must also introduce them to the duties of citizenship. They must dispense civic education by bringing students together, despite their differences, while instilling respect for differences. By organizing themselves as small-scale societies, schools will establish structures that will encourage participation in and the exercise of democracy, and will provide opportunities for true commitment.

Schools must constitute exemplary communities that reflect their educational goals.

They must meet their responsibility to provide support services designed to help students achieve success; to recruit, train and retrain teachers on the basis of the qualities expected of them; to associate all members of staff in the definition and implementation of educational activities; to solicit ongoing parental support; and to draw on all the educational potential of their human resources.

With respect to the organization of the system, areas of responsibility must be assigned at the various levels to ensure that each level assumes its **share of responsibility** and treats students fairly. Decentralization does not mean that solidarity is no longer necessary; on the contrary, it will now be manifested in different ways.

Similarly, a coherent organization of instructional services must be introduced to facilitate continuity of learning and a better distribution of services, especially at the postsecondary level, and also to ensure greater accessibility, more efficient management and a rationalization of expenditures. The education system will have to reexamine the rigidity of its training practices, in particular those aimed at adult students whose varied and multiple needs must be reflected in flexible, adaptable services.

Lastly, there have been many calls for educational institutions to open up to the outside community, to be more receptive to contributions from various sources, and to establish better mechanisms for collaboration and coordination. This increasingly widespread concern with regard to the education sector is a valuable lever for social evolution, and must be used to our advantage. To prevent schools from becoming fortresses that resist any outside influence and refuse any outside contribution, the links established between schools and the community must be designed to allow contributions to merge rather than simply accumulate. We must also, however, guard against the opposite extreme of schools open to all winds, to the detriment of their educational mission.

To illustrate how these overall educational goals can be implemented, we have mapped out broad areas corresponding to where and how we must direct our efforts. The proposed actions concern major players in both the social and the educational spheres, and are, in our view, the ones most likely to lead to a renewal of our education system.

1. We also consulted a report prepared by the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation for the Estates General on Education entitled *Pour la réforme du système éducatif--Dix ans de consultation et de réflexion*, Advice to the Minister of Education (Sainte-Foy, 1995).

2. Royal Commission of Inquiry on Education, *Report of the Royal Commission of Inquiry on Education in the Province of Québec*, 5 vols. (Québec, 1963 to 1966).

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2. PRIORITY ACTIONS

2.1 REESTABLISH THE PRINCIPLE OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

Québec has made tremendous strides in recent decades with regard to access to education. For example, while only slightly over half (55.8 percent) of young people made it to Secondary V in general education in 1982-1983, nearly three-quarters (74.5 percent) did so 12 years later, in 1994-1995. The proportion of young people entering college and university has also risen substantially.³ However, as pointed out by others,⁴ progress varies depending on the social group concerned. While women, francophones and adults have gained ground, there has not been any significant change in the situation of young people from modest social backgrounds. We are not prepared to renounce the democratic ideal which governed the educational reform stemming from the Parent Report. On the contrary, we believe that this objective, which has not yet been fully achieved, should be pursued even more vigorously **by stepping up efforts to ensure that as many young people as possible, particularly disadvantaged young people, have access to education and, above all, meet with success in their academic careers.**

As emphasized in *The State of Education in Québec*, we believe that setting clear objectives with respect to accessibility and the graduation rate for each level of education constitutes an effective approach. First of all, it encourages us to compare our situation with that of other western countries with similar objectives. It also forces us to define the phenomenon more clearly by identifying, for example, which social groups lag farther behind, a process that in turn encourages inquiry into the causes underlying these disparities. Lastly, it obliges us to achieve results, and thereby encourages not only the partners of the education system but also other social partners to find and implement measures most likely to attain these objectives. **In our opinion, it is realistic to expect 85 percent of young people in a given age group to obtain a secondary school general or vocational diploma before the age of 20, 60 percent a college diploma and 30 percent a bachelor's degree.** To underscore the efforts needed to attain these objectives, we should mention that, in 1993-1994, 69 percent of young people were deemed likely to obtain a secondary school diploma, while in 1994, 38 percent were expected to obtain a college diploma and 26.8 percent a bachelor's degree.⁵ Obviously, to attain our current objectives, we will have to intensify our efforts to prevent and fight illiteracy.

Although girls seem fairly well equipped to attain these objectives, since, at present, they nearly achieve or even surpass them as far as the bachelor's degree is concerned, this is not the case of boys, who have more catching up to do. It should be reiterated

that a larger number of boys drop out of school: 38.6 percent leave secondary school without a diploma compared with 27.1 percent of girls. Moreover, fewer boys attend college and university.⁶ While we have no intention of checking the progress of girls and, in particular, of blocking their penetration of sectors traditionally reserved for men, we can no longer leave boys to their own devices. **Studies must be undertaken to more clearly identify the factors underlying the marked lack of interest of certain boys in school. Appropriate corrective action** must also be taken, notably with regard to support, supervision and teaching methods, to ensure that boys are not gradually excluded from school. **Care must be exercised, however, to avoid measures likely to have a negative impact on girls.**

To attain these objectives, we must reembrace the ideals and democratic practices abandoned to some extent over the past ten years or so. Concern for equal opportunity has given way, in several instances, to elitism, even as of elementary school. Gradually, and almost imperceptibly, schools have become stratified, adopting selection practices based on performance and creating a small group of elect students and a contingent of excluded ones. There has been a sharp increase in the number of students enrolled in private schools, particularly at the secondary level. In response to the perceived loss of several of its best features, the public education system has set up its own elite branches--international schools, specialized schools and programs, classes for so-called gifted students--with selection criteria intended to rival those of the most prestigious private institutions. A large number of students (i.e., up to one-third of secondary students in urban centres),⁷ often from the most socially and educationally advantaged backgrounds, no longer attend regular schools, a phenomenon that is having alarming results. Regular classes in public schools now shoulder the crushing pedagogical burden imposed by our social choices in education, namely, compulsory school attendance, the integration of students with handicaps or learning or adjustment difficulties, the francization and welcoming of immigrant students, and the maintenance of small village or neighbourhood schools. This is because the obligations stemming from these choices are not shared equitably among the various components of the education system. For example, public schools are required by law to keep students until they reach the age of 16. Private schools are not obliged to accept or retain students who perform poorly, or to integrate students with handicaps or learning or adjustment difficulties. Only a small proportion of students in private schools fall into the latter category, i.e., 2 percent at the elementary level and 0.2 percent at the secondary level. In public schools, on the other hand, 12 percent of elementary students and 16.2 of secondary students have handicaps or learning or adjustment difficulties.⁸ In the public education system, regular schools have also had to shoulder these responsibilities alone, owing to the emergence of schools that select students on the basis of academic performance, a situation that has resulted in a two-tier public education system.

We cannot assert that our goal is to ensure educational success for the largest possible number of students if, at the same time, we place the most underprivileged students in the most disadvantageous conditions. On the contrary, as mentioned by many conference participants, we must do more for those with less. It is only then that we will be able to improve the level of schooling of all Quebecers, for the purpose of ensuring our social and economic development, and to pursue our democratic ideal. We also believe that priority should be given to bringing students from different social backgrounds and with varying degrees of educational success together in the same school in order to foster their socialization and help them learn to live together. In our opinion, therefore, it is urgent to **put a stop to the multitiering of elementary and secondary schools by ensuring that priority is given to revitalizing public schools and making them accessible to all students.** For this purpose, **a moratorium** should be imposed **on the opening of private schools**, while **subsidies** to the private education system **should be gradually reduced.** At the same time, steps should be taken to ensure that private schools experiencing difficulties **may be integrated into the public education system. In addition, public schools should no longer be allowed to engage in selection practices during the compulsory schooling period.** We acknowledge, however, that certain fields, such as dance, music, high-performance sports and circus occupations, require special training, involving the intensive, early development of special aptitudes. In our opinion, **a limited number of schools** offering specialty programs of provincial interest could offer appropriate training for young people in these fields.

These choices require that the programs offered in regular schools be more diversified. We think that each school should have a distinctive educational project, adapted to the local community. Similarly, we believe that schools should have course offerings tailored to the needs and aptitudes of each student, provided such diversity does not jeopardize the attainment of the objectives of common basic education up to the end of Secondary III or contribute to the marginalization of the most vulnerable categories of students. Many innovative pedagogical projects have been implemented in neighbourhood or alternative schools open to all students, proof that diversification may be achieved without creating a two-tier school system.

If we are to guarantee equal opportunity for all members of society, we must ensure that the desire to pursue an education is not undermined by problems of geographical accessibility. In keeping with the view of most conference participants, we believe that **small village or neighbourhood schools should be kept open, as far as possible.** Many parents consider them essential to the survival and development of their community. Several pilot projects aimed at maintaining such schools have been implemented in recent years. For the sake of fairness and coherence, we believe that **clear guidelines** should be established to help local communities make decisions. Since the reasons for maintaining or closing small schools are not strictly educational, we believe that **an interministerial territorial occupation policy** would be extremely

useful for clarifying social choices in this regard. In our opinion, school boards are responsible for establishing and announcing criteria for the maintenance of small schools in their territory, notably with regard to the quality of educational services, students' educational conditions, employees' working conditions, the financial viability of institutions and the will of the community. School board decisions should always be based on extensive public debate.

Guidelines for keeping small schools open should reflect the general concern **to ensure that education is accessible geographically**. They must therefore be translated into a **general framework for maintaining educational services, including vocational and postsecondary services, geared to the needs of populations in the regions**. Admittedly, it is impossible to offer the entire range of services in all regions, especially in the current budgetary context. Nevertheless, we must resist the temptation of concentrating educational services in large urban centres and regions with a high population density, since this would deprive groups in other regions of development opportunities and their right to an education. In this regard, **the potential of distance education and new technologies should be developed more fully**. If the only option available to people in the regions is subsidized expatriation, which, in any case, merely increases their debt load, the disparities presently observed among the various regions of Québec with regard to persistence in school will, in all likelihood, simply be exacerbated.⁹

The special situation of Montréal public schools highlights the fact that living in an underprivileged environment is not always synonymous with living in the regions. Over half (58 percent) of the schools on the Island of Montréal are classified by the MEQ as socioeconomically disadvantaged. This situation affects the student success rate, which is among the lowest in Québec. In compulsory education, Island of Montréal schools alone serve about three-quarters of the allophone students in Québec. As a result, they have to cope with formidable pedagogical challenges similar to those encountered in schools in other large North American cities.¹⁰ In our opinion, **special pedagogical and financial support must be provided for the most socioeconomically disadvantaged areas with a high concentration of students from cultural communities**. Such support might enable Montréal to use the diversity of its population and its cultural infrastructures as a springboard for social development and prevent it from becoming an educational disaster zone.

In view of the weak academic performance of certain students from cultural communities, support measures must be introduced. Special measures are required to deal with the integration problems encountered by students who have little or no education when they arrive in Québec. Around one-fifth of the students in the welcoming classes of the Commission des écoles catholiques de Montréal (CECM), the Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal (PSBGM) and the Commission scolaire Sainte-Croix fall into this category. The problem is particularly acute at the

secondary level, where it affects one student in three.¹¹ In general, however, the main concern is whether schools are able to integrate these students. As mentioned in *The State of Education in Québec*, many problems persist, despite the commendable efforts of the front-line players in the education system: for example, over 10 000 students at the elementary and secondary levels attend private ethnic and religious schools and are therefore not integrated into the regular public school system; welcoming classes are located in schools where almost all students are of immigrant origin; contacts with parents and community groups active in multi-ethnic neighbourhoods are still too limited; and lastly, school staff is not adequately trained with regard to these new realities.

A comprehensive plan establishing action guidelines is sorely lacking. We believe it is high time **the policy on immigration and the integration of newcomers adopted in 1990 was translated into a policy statement clarifying the responsibilities of the education system with respect to intercultural education and the integration of immigrant students.**¹² Schools must play a role in promoting recognition of Québec as a predominantly French society, fostering better understanding of and respect for democratic institutions and creating harmonious relations among communities with a view to building a society in which all citizens participate. Such relations should be based on consensus, with immigrants agreeing to join and make a commitment to the host society, and the latter agreeing to assist and display openness towards immigrants. The policy statement referred to above should deal with a number of issues, including the deconfessionalization of the school system and a review of the curricula for the purpose of enhancing students' knowledge of Québec institutions, history and culture and helping them become more open to the world. It should also focus on civic education, which encourages students to respect common values and institutions and to accept and display tolerance for diversity. Other elements that should be included in the policy are school staff training in intercultural issues, a review of teaching methods, attention to the concentration of immigrant students in certain schools, and better representation of cultural communities in the various employment sectors in the education field.

Native students also have special support, reception and referral needs that are not always adequately met.¹³ For example, more than 30 native students are sometimes grouped together in special classes, while the parents of native children who have failed are convened en masse to specially organized meetings. In addition, native children are required to take tests that do not reflect their cultural differences. School staff tend to expect parents and the community to guide and supervise native students rather than providing the necessary services themselves. Special attention must be paid to these students during transitional periods, i.e., when they leave band schools and enter schools run by school boards, or when they move away from home to pursue a higher education. At such times, students should have access to liaison

officers or structures that bring native students together.

The situation of students with handicaps or learning or adjustment difficulties also merits special attention, not only because schools must fulfil their obligations to instruct and socialize these students and provide them with qualifications just as they do for other students, but also because their growing number and the desire to integrate them as fully as possible into regular classes require appropriate conditions. At present, 12.6 percent of students in schools run by school boards have handicaps or learning or adjustment difficulties. Over two-thirds of these young people have learning difficulties, while nearly one-fifth experience behavioural problems. Students with physical or intellectual handicaps represent slightly over 10 percent of young people in this category.¹⁴

Conference participants seemed to feel especially ill-prepared **to deal with the special situation of children with behavioural problems**. Although some complained that these children disturb the other students, participants also stated that they should be offered something other than withdrawal from school or confinement in special institutions. In any case, children who attend these institutions are often not reintegrated into regular classes. Several projects are currently under way in schools, but their results are not always evaluated and disseminated.¹⁵ In our opinion, **efforts should be intensified to find appropriate ways of dealing with children with behavioural problems and to provide school staff with the training and teaching resources they need to cope with this situation**.

Considerable progress has been made with respect to the integration of students with handicaps or learning or adjustment difficulties into regular schools and classes since the adoption of a policy to that effect in 1978, even though integration into regular classes is more difficult, apparently, at the secondary level. A comparison of legislation across Canada reveals that Québec is one of the provinces that most effectively guarantees these students' right to an education.¹⁶ Our consultations show that **efforts to integrate these students into regular schools must be pursued, while a range of approaches** (total or partial integration into regular classes, special classes and special schools) **should be maintained** in order to respond appropriately to the needs of each student. Many participants talked about **the conditions required** for successful integration. These include early detection of students' difficulties, accurate assessment of needs, reasonable objectives, preparation of individualized education plans prior to student placement, consideration of parents' wishes, consideration of the expertise of people in contact with the student (parents, administrators, teachers, professional and support staff), awareness of the problem in the student's entourage, sufficient financial and human resources (especially professional and technical support staff for students and teachers) and functional cooperation between the various partners involved (health and social services, community organizations and

businesses).

During the regional conferences, participants emphasized the need to **provide services for students experiencing learning difficulties in adult and higher education**. We share this concern.

In our opinion, **the tendency to use repeating** as a means of allowing students to catch up before going on to the next grade **should be called into question**. In 1994-1995, 6.7 percent of students at the elementary and secondary levels repeated a grade. The cumulative effect of this phenomenon is reflected in the age at which students enter secondary school: over one student in four does not reach secondary school until after age 12.¹⁷ It is estimated that repeating costs school boards over \$500 million. It may well be asked whether this money might be more wisely spent on prevention and support measures.

If we are to guarantee equal opportunity for all members of society, we must ensure that education is financially accessible. Therefore, **the need to maintain free education, including student services, up to and including the college level should be reaffirmed**. We also believe that vigilance must be exercised with regard to the charging of miscellaneous fees, particularly in compulsory education. More effective monitoring of such fees is required at the college level. Given that there are still not enough young people from underprivileged social groups enrolled **in university**, we would like to reiterate that **raising tuition fees should only be envisaged as a last resort**. We maintain that **the student financial assistance system is based on valid principles**, including accessibility and the goal of achieving a balanced distribution of funds between loans and bursaries, not only to prevent students from going deep into debt but to avoid exceeding the government's ability to pay. Equally valid principles are the participatory nature of the system, in that it expects both students and parents to contribute, and its supplemental role, in that it provides additional funding if the expected contributions are insufficient. However, as proposed in the MacDonald Report, **eligibility for assistance should be extended** to take the needs of adults pursuing part-time studies into account.¹⁸ The financial assistance system should also be improved with regard to students enrolled in vocational education. Such improvements should be aimed, notably, at meeting vocational education students' financial needs relating to the purchase of specialized equipment and microcomputers. They should also reflect the fact that the time frame of vocational education programs is not always based on the regular school year and take into account the special situation of students who are returning to school and in whose case the expected financial contribution is considered excessive.¹⁹ Measures must be implemented to make parents aware that they have a duty to contribute to financing their children's education and to inform them of the amount they are expected to pay under the student financial assistance system. We agree with the principle of income-contingent loan

repayment. However, we also believe that the measures adopted for this purpose and the impact of this decision should be studied more fully before pursuing such an approach. Lastly, steps must be taken to ensure that future changes to the financial assistance system do not contribute to raising students' debt load.²⁰

3. MINISTÈRE DE L'ÉDUCATION. *Indicateurs de l'éducation - Édition 1995*, p. 47.

3. Ministère de l'Éducation, *Education Indicators 1995* (Québec, 1996), p. 47.

4. Pierre Dandurand, "Démocratie et école au Québec: bilan et défis," in *L'éducation 25 ans plus tard* (n.p.: Institut québécois de recherche sur la culture, 1990), p. 37-60.

5. Ministère de l'Éducation, *Education Indicators 1995*, p. 106, 111 and 113. Data pertaining to secondary school diplomas do not take secondary school vocational diplomas into account.

6. Ibid., p. 53. These data do not take into account diplomas obtained in the youth sector in 1993-1994.

7. The percentage of French-sector secondary school students attending private schools in 1994-1995 was 27.7 percent in Montréal, 20.8 percent in Estrie, 19 percent in Québec. Source: Compilation by Francine Bédard-Hô based on MEQ data.

8. Ministère de l'Éducation, Direction des statistiques et des études quantitatives, "Effectif scolaire à temps plein et à temps partiel du secteur des jeunes des commissions scolaires, des établissements d'enseignement primaire et secondaire privés subventionnés et des établissements d'enseignement collégial publics et privés subventionnés 1993-1994" (Québec, n.d.).

9. Regarding geographical disparities in relation to persistence in school, see ministère de l'Éducation, *Education Indicators 1995*, p. 109 and Groupe Écobes, *Les disparités géographiques et sociales de l'accessibilité au collégial* (Jonquière: Cégep de Jonquière, 1993).

10. Conseil supérieur de l'éducation, *La réussite à l'école montréalaise: une urgence pour la société québécoise*, Advice to the Minister of Education (Sainte-Foy, 1996).

11. Ministère de l'Éducation, *Le point sur les services d'accueil et de francisation de l'école publique québécoise--Pratiques actuelles et résultats des élèves* (Québec, 1996), p. 30.

- [12.](#) This proposal was made by the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation in *Pour un accueil et une intégration réussis des élèves des communautés culturelles*, Advice to the Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education and Science (Sainte-Foy, 1993).
- [13.](#) Commission for the Estates General on Education, "Compte rendu de la rencontre avec le Conseil en éducation des Premières Nations" (Québec, April 1996).
- [14.](#) Commission for the Estates General on Education, "Le redoublement au primaire-secondaire," Francine Bédard-Hô (Québec, June 20, 1995).
- [15.](#) Égide Royer and S. Moisan, "Comment évaluer vos services aux élèves qui ont des difficultés de comportement," *Education Canada*, Summer 1996, p. 15-21.
- [16.](#) William J. Smith, *Equal Educational Opportunity for Students with Disabilities: Legislative Action in Canada* (Montréal: McGill University Office of Research into Educational Policy, July 1994).
- [17.](#) Ministère de l'Éducation, *Education Indicators 1995*, p. 54.
- [18.](#) Rapport du groupe de travail sur le Régime d'aide financière aux étudiants, *L'aide financière aux étudiants: un équilibre à maintenir* (Québec: ministère de l'Éducation, 1995).
- [19.](#) Recommendations on this issue were made by the MEQ's Direction générale de l'aide financière aux étudiants in "Rapport du comité de travail sur la formation professionnelle au secondaire" (Québec, December 1995).
- [20.](#) For current data on students' debt load, see ministère de l'Éducation, *Étude sur la dette accumulée par les bénéficiaires de l'aide financière aux étudiants* (Québec, 1994); Bureau de la statistique du Québec, *Enquête sur le mode de vie des étudiants du secondaire professionnel et du collégial* (Québec, 1996), p. 105-113; Sales, Arnaud et al., *Le monde étudiant à la fin du XX^e siècle* (Montréal: Université de Montréal Department of Sociology, May 1996), p. 223-229.

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2.2 EXTEND AND IMPROVE EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES

Some 30 years ago, the Parent Report recommended the introduction of supervised educational activities for children aged 4 and 5. The report proposed that preschool services be first developed for 5-year-olds and then extended to 4-year-olds. Since that time, **social changes have merely reinforced the need for early childhood services.** The entry of more women, especially mothers with young children, into the labour market has boosted the demand for preschool services. The decrease in the number of children per family poses new challenges with respect to the socialization of children. It has also created a need for collective services bringing children into contact with others and enabling them to develop social skills. The growing number of children living in poverty, often in single-parent families, constitutes a risk factor for the development of these children, which even the most affectionate, attentive parents cannot readily offset. Given the increasingly multi-ethnic character of Québec society, attention must be paid to the special needs of young immigrant children, who should be introduced as soon as possible to the common language and culture of the host society. These factors, while not negating parental responsibility, argue for greater collective involvement in the education of preschoolers and for the introduction of services likely to achieve this goal.

Several recent studies confirm the **pertinence and advantages of early intervention.**²¹ Preschool programs are considered more effective than remedial activities for preventing students from failing or falling behind in school, since corrective measures are often taken only after students have begun to experience difficulties and have lost confidence in themselves and their abilities. The first years of a child's life are crucial to the development of the cognitive, social and emotional skills that will enable him or her to learn later on and function in society. They also have a determining impact on how parents view their child's chances of success. Therefore, action must be taken in the early stages of a child's development, especially since it costs less to intervene at that time. Early childhood education services, especially those involving parents and the community as well as cooperation between partners, help to offset the negative effects of poverty and parents' psychosocial problems on children. **Given that early intervention programs have a more positive impact on children and parents from underprivileged backgrounds, these groups should be the first to have access to them if universal services are introduced only gradually.**

Evidently, **the services currently available do not satisfy existing demand.** As a result, many parents are obliged to do the best they can to reconcile their parental and professional responsibilities, while a large number of children receive services of sometimes questionable quality. Only part-time kindergarten for 5-year-olds is

universal and free of charge. While not compulsory, it is attended by almost all children in this age group. Other services are offered to only certain categories of preschoolers, such as children from underprivileged environments. These services include full-time kindergarten for 5-year-olds and the various types of kindergarten for 4-year olds, namely, classroom-based kindergarten, home kindergarten and full-time kindergarten for children with handicaps. Special activities are also available for parents (Passe-Partout program). At present, only 39.5 percent of the target clientele take advantage of these programs for at-risk children.²²

The supply of day care services is even more limited and disorganized. Despite the increase in the number of day care spaces over the past decade, there are still not enough to meet parents' needs, particularly with regard to children aged 3 to 5. Only 15.3 percent of children under 6 attend regulated day care services, such as for-profit or not-for-profit day care centres, agency-coordinated home day care services and school day care services. Québec lags behind in this sector compared with most OECD countries. For example, while around 22 percent of 4-year-olds attend child development centres (kindergarten and regulated day care services) in Québec, a much higher proportion of children in this age group use preschool services in Sweden (50.8 percent), the United States (53 percent), and New Zealand, Spain, the Netherlands, Belgium and France (over 90 percent).

As mentioned by the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation in a recent report on the subject, **problems also exist with respect to the quality of services.** Non-regulated services, which, it must be reiterated, are used by most preschoolers, are not subject to any rules or official standards regarding the quality of educational services, health care, nutrition, hygiene and safety. As for regulated services, the number of infractions reported by the Office des services de garde à l'enfance and the relatively high number of complaints cast doubt on the quality of services offered by for-profit day care centres. **Training standards for day care staff seem very low**, considering the wide range of skills needed to foster the development of children with very different characteristics. In day care centres, only one worker in three is required to have recognized, pertinent training, provided by certain college- or university-level programs. In school day care services, employees must have completed Secondary IV and have working experience with children. Several factors are likely to affect the quality of kindergarten services, including the number of children per teacher and the lack of specific guidelines for the educational program, a situation that can have excellent or disastrous results. We are not attempting to deny the quality of the educational activities offered in day care centres or kindergartens. On the contrary, we have enough confidence in these services to request that they be extended. However, we also believe that guidelines should be established for their development.

In *The State of Education in Québec*, we proposed an increase in the number of day care spaces and the extension of existing kindergarten services for children aged 4 and

5. Based on what we heard during the regional and provincial conferences, we have had to reconsider our position to some extent. **Nevertheless, we still believe that full-time kindergarten for 5-year-olds should be offered to all children.** Several positive comments were made in this regard by participants from regions in designated zones where such kindergartens have already been established. Extending this service to all 5-year-olds would ensure greater continuity for the many children who now use day care services half the day, when they are not in kindergarten. Regulated day care services are underdeveloped in some regions. In our opinion, therefore, it would be more realistic to use the existing preschool infrastructure to offer quality services. The university-level training requirements applicable to kindergarten teachers are more compatible with the role we would like these services to play during the year before children enter school. Contrary to what some people seem to fear, we are not suggesting that children be forced into school when they are too young, with all the risks such a measure might entail. Instead, we are proposing that children have access to learning activities that will prepare them for school and be geared to their pace of learning and the way in which they learn. As in part-time kindergarten, this approach would be based, notably, on play-oriented activities. **We acknowledge that the needs of 5-year-olds are very different from those of older children.** They are also very different from those of 2-year-olds, who sometimes attend the same day care centres. In working with 5-year-olds, it is important, for example, to ensure that they have enough room to move around, are provided with a physical environment geared to their size, can take naps and are integrated into small, stable groups of children. Steps must also be taken to foster ongoing contacts between their parents and the staff who work with these children. In our opinion, the education community is equipped to meet these needs. **For the time being, we see no reason to make kindergarten compulsory.** Such a measure might run counter to the beliefs of parents, who would see it as a form of conscription. Furthermore, we have noted that when such services are available, parents take advantage of them, even if they are not obliged to do so.

Given the range of expectations and the unequal development of **services for 4-year-olds** in the various communities and regions, a more flexible approach will have to be adopted. In our opinion, **free public services should be offered part-time for all children and full-time for certain categories of preschoolers** with special needs, such as children from underprivileged backgrounds and cultural communities and children with handicaps. In addition, **parents should be allowed to decide**, on the basis of local resources, which **type of services will be offered (kindergarten or not-for-profit day care centres)**. A future policy on early childhood services should provide for a mechanism to coordinate and arbitrate the supply of services in this sector. We think it is possible, and even necessary, for **both** the day care and preschool **networks to agree on guidelines** for educational activities for 4-year-olds, taking into account the program already used in kindergarten for 5-year-olds. However, we also believe that, to ensure quality services, **more stringent training**

requirements must be introduced for workers in day care centres and school day care services. A college diploma in early childhood education or the equivalent should be essential to finding a job in this sector. At the same time, people already employed in day care services should be offered professional development sessions to upgrade their qualifications to the more stringent training standards.

To detect problems in the early years of a child's life, we had originally proposed that 3-year-olds undergo a development assessment by specialists from the health and social services network. In general, these specialists, like most participants in the regional conferences, were opposed to such an approach, which they considered expensive and inefficient. They were also worried that children would be labelled. Although we now agree with these concerns, we would like to reiterate the importance of **ensuring that parents and day care workers are aware of and able to detect the development problems of young children and to obtain the necessary follow-up.**

Over the past decade, the government has introduced several pieces of legislation, policies and action plans in the family, day care services, education, health and social services and immigration sectors, which have provided guidelines for early childhood services. However, on account of a lack of joint action, these sectorial initiatives have not been as complementary as we might have hoped. Given the large number of players involved in early childhood services, we believe, like the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation, that **a comprehensive policy on early childhood services** would clarify the role of the various ministries and other partners, while ensuring better coordination and more concerted action in this sector.

[21.](#) Marthe Hamel, "Les faits et les théories qui soutiennent les interventions éducatives au préscolaire" in *Éducation et intervention au préscolaire*, ed. Nicole Royer (Boucherville: Gaëtan Morin, 1995); Ministère de l'Éducation, Direction de la recherche, "L'impact des interventions précoces en milieu économiquement faible sur la situation scolaire des élèves sept ans après leur entrée en première année du primaire," Working Document (Québec, 1992), and *Services éducatifs donnés aux enfants de quatre ans de milieu économiquement faible: Effet sur la diplomation*, Guy Legault (Québec, 1993); Ruth Rose and Diane Richard, *Les coûts et les bénéfices d'un programme éducatif préscolaire, universel, facultatif et gratuit* (Sainte-Foy: Conseil supérieur de l'éducation, May 1996).

[22.](#) Data in this section are from a report on early childhood education services prepared by the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation, *Pour un développement intégré des services éducatifs à la petite enfance: de la vision à l'action*, Advice to the Minister of Education (Sainte-Foy, 1996).

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2.3 RESTRUCTURE ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL CURRICULA TO INCREASE THEIR CULTURAL CONTENT

For the most part, **the elementary and secondary school curricula** were drawn up 15 years ago, at a time when market globalization, the social economy and the Internet were unheard of. Clearly, the time has come to **overhaul** the curricula to bring them in line with social changes and demands. This revision would also be an opportunity to restore some of the cohesiveness that has been lost over the years as, all too often, a new course was added every time a new need became apparent. A number of "minor subjects," some with overlapping objectives, thus found their way onto the student timetable. As a result, those subjects which could have provided student with a good, solid base were taught in dribs and drabs throughout elementary and secondary school. We are not saying that we should go back to the three R's. **Rather, the idea is to put students in touch with our rich heritage in the various cultural spheres and with the most significant human achievements.** By enriching the curriculum, we would also allow students to gradually deepen their knowledge in the various fields and become aware of the links between them. We would allow them to develop the skills and attitudes they need to understand and master their environment, and integrate into a changing world as creative and responsible citizens. We feel that the present curricula are not sufficiently rich and balanced, and that is why we are proposing to restructure them in order to increase their cultural content. A number of participants in the Estates General reminded us that mastery of French and knowledge of history were sorely lacking. We are also of the opinion that adjustments are called for in this respect.

Besides discussions about the room each subject should have in the timetable, restructuring the curricula will entail **defining the fundamental learning** (understood in the sense of "learning to learn, to be, to do and to live together," to borrow the terms used in the Delors report)²³ we would like students to acquire at different stages in their compulsory schooling. We would thus avoid a piecemeal approach based on special demands or pressure from groups lobbying for specific subjects. The learning profiles set out in the Corbo report²⁴ are a significant step in the right direction. Indeed, participants in the regional conferences have agreed that this report would be a good starting point for the revision of the curricula. We believe the learning profiles should centre on the following **six major learning areas. While largely based on the Corbo report, they include certain adjustments we feel are in order and reflect our particular standpoint.**

Language

Students must develop communication skills in the language of instruction through reading, writing, speaking and listening. While language learning should be given an appropriate place in the student timetable, it should also be a concern running through all school activities. Language skills are fundamental since they are at the root of all learning and social interaction. However, language is more than just a useful tool. It is a vehicle for culture, emotions and ideas. It is through words that we express our uniqueness and it is through our common language that we forge our collective identity. To become proficient in their mother tongue (or adoptive language, in the case of immigrants), students must learn its grammar, its rules and its possibilities. Through practice, students will learn to organize their thoughts and express their feelings. The study of literature is also very valuable as a tool for understanding the mechanics of language and, more importantly, for understanding what language reveals about human beings, their ideas and feelings, their evolution as well as the age in which they live. As well, the study of literature provides students with the opportunity to exercise their critical sense. In the current context of planetary interdependence, learning a second language is a necessity as much for its practical usefulness as for the window it opens on other cultures. Learning a second language can also lead to better knowledge of one's own language through comparison. In this regard, English should be foremost for students whose language of instruction is French.

Technology, Science and Mathematics

Today's world is strongly marked by science and technology. Thanks to advances in these fields, we now master whole aspects of our existence over which we had little control in the past. New information and communications technologies are changing the way we think, work and communicate, and familiarity with them is becoming an essential prerequisite for accessing knowledge. If calculating, estimating and problem-solving have long been essential skills for everyday life, it is becoming increasingly indispensable to know how to read and interpret quantitative information in all its forms, including in activities and occupations related to the social sciences. Our schools must teach students the terms and methodologies specific to these disciplines, but also show how they relate to life in society: scientific concepts, practices and products are human creations that reflect their time and relationships among social groups. The importance that should be given to their development raises numerous ethical issues. In this sense, basic scientific and technical training is vital for enabling all citizens to participate in democratic debates on these issues.

Life in Society

In rapidly changing times such as ours, the absence of reference points for understanding the meaning of social changes can easily lead to a feeling of alienation and passivity. Our schools must provide students with these reference points so that

they may understand the broad functioning of society, its geographical reality, its relativity and historical continuity, its political issues, its values and its diversity. Our schools must help students understand the way our society and its institutions are structured. They must help them understand their roots so that they may grow into active citizens who are able to contribute to the development of their democracy. Courses such as history,²⁵ geography, economics and civics are conducive to learning about the social reality, but the opportunities for involvement provided and the values upheld by schools are also ways of introducing students to life in society.

The Arts

The study and practice of the arts initiate students into sensitivity, subjectivity and creativity. The arts also attest to the history and evolution of humanity. It is vital that students be introduced to these forms of self-expression and communication. While this introduction must comprise formal learning about the basics of the different artistic disciplines, it must extend beyond the classroom to include visits to cultural venues and contacts with artists. It must also provide opportunities for an intense artistic life within the school itself. This is how we will succeed in fostering and stimulating a taste for the arts among students.

Personal Development

Physical and psychological well-being is not given out at birth once and for all. It is essential to provide students with the knowledge and attitudes that will allow them to feel good about themselves, to live healthy lives, to discover their values, to establish harmonious relations with others, and to cope with problems they might encounter in their personal life, at school, in their professional life, in their family life or in their social relations. Physical education has a key role to play in this regard. Other activities geared to getting students to know themselves better, develop an ethical sense and make appropriate career choices are also essential. These activities can take the form of specific courses, be integrated into the objectives of various subjects, or be offered as a part of student services or even extracurricular activities. *General Skills*

Beyond the knowledge specific to each subject, schools must help students acquire more general methodology skills that are essential to reflection, observation, analysis, deductive reasoning, clear and logical thinking, judgement, the search for and selection of information and the organization of work, among other things. These general skills include basic attitudes conducive to lifelong learning, for example, a taste for learning, curiosity, rigour, a sense of effort, creativity and intellectual independence. They also include skills that are essential for task completion and that are a requirement in today's labour market, such as a commitment to quality, a taste for risk and innovation, the aptitude for teamwork, and the ability to situate one's

actions in a larger organizational whole.

The skills students are expected to acquire in these various learning areas must be defined for each cycle of elementary and secondary school. **We must also ensure that the exit profiles for a given level of education coincide with the entry profiles of the following level of education.** In this regard, several participants deplored the fact that secondary school exit profiles are not in line with college entry profiles. We are also of this opinion. It is illogical that students who meet the requirements for obtaining a secondary school diploma do not meet the general requirements for admission to college (the question of prerequisites for certain programs remains to be addressed). Similarly, we firmly believe that students must attain the established profiles before going on to the next level, **to avoid spending too much energy on remedial activities** and compromising the mission specific to each level of education. Consequently, "buffer zones" should be created to smooth the transition between the different levels of education.

In our opinion, **the following principles should be taken into account in revising the elementary and secondary school curricula** on the basis of the established learning profiles. Such a revision should: respect the mission of each level of education by providing the necessary continuity between them; encompass the three educational goals and four types of knowledge ("learning to learn, to be, to do and to live together"); keep in mind that common-core general education should extend to the end of Secondary III and provide for diversification from Secondary IV on; ensure balance between the various subjects; provide for a balanced distribution of subject matter throughout the school years; consider the possibilities of interdisciplinarity and subject integration; clarify the role of other activities besides courses and of other educational venues; involve school staff, particularly teachers, in the restructuring of curricula and the revision of programs that should logically follow; set a clear timetable while allowing an adequate amount of time for necessary debate and discussion. To bring this task to completion, we believe that the MEQ should set up a **multi-sector task force for the restructuring of elementary and secondary school curricula**, composed of people from different sectors of society and various disciplinary fields, at all levels of education. The task force should first agree on the broad learning areas and the resulting profiles for each cycle of elementary and secondary school. Then, after consulting the schools, and particularly teacher representatives, the MEQ should determine the importance to be given to the subjects in the basic school regulations. In this regard, the MEQ should plan measures to guarantee a smooth transition for practising teachers and provide for any necessary adjustments in terms of program reform and teacher training.

The goal of this operation should be to implement the new curricula before the year 2000. A permanent mechanism should be established to update the curricula on an ongoing basis. This mechanism should be flexible, efficient and transparent.

[23.](#) International Commission on Education and Learning for the Twenty-First Century (chaired by Jacques Delors), *L'éducation, un trésor est caché dedans*, Report to the UNESCO (Paris: UNESCO and Odile Jacob, 1996). A number of education task forces have made proposals regarding fundamental learning or essential skills: Roger Fauroux et Georges Chacornac, *Pour l'école: Rapport de la Commission présidée par Roger Fauroux* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1996); "Enseigner et apprendre--Vers la société cognitive" in *Livre blanc de la communauté européenne sur l'éducation et la formation* (n.p., 1995); United States Department of Education, *America 2000: An Education Strategy* (Washington, 1991); Royal Commission on Learning, *For the Love of Learning: Report of the Royal Commission on Learning*, 5 vols. (Ontario, 1994).

[24.](#) Task Force on Elementary and Secondary School Learning Profiles, *Preparing Our Youth for the 21st Century* (Québec: ministère de l'Éducation, 1994).

[25.](#) The Task Force on the Teaching of History published its report, entitled *Learning from the Past*, in June 1996. The proposals it contains will be examined as a part of the restructuring of the elementary and secondary school curricula.

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2.4 CONSOLIDATE VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

We believe it is essential to direct our efforts towards ensuring that **no student leaves the education system without qualifications** that will allow him or her to enter the labour market. As discussed in *The State of Education in Québec*, the 1986 reform of vocational education, which involved raising the general education admission requirements in order to improve the branch's image, actually resulted in a drop in student enrolment. Students under the age of 20 now account for less than one-third of enrolments for secondary-level vocational education programs. We believe that there is an urgent need to redesign a vocational education branch for youth-sector students, parallel to the current program better geared to adult needs, and to ensure that it is seen as a normal educational option.

We feel that the programs leading to the secondary school vocational diploma should be made accessible after Secondary III, and that general education courses should be taken concurrently with vocational education courses. It is important that students continue their general education in preparation for higher studies and skill upgrading. Also, as several participants pointed out, **general education courses should reflect the interests of the students** who opt for vocational or technical education, **a challenge that has yet to be met successfully**. This is shown by the large numbers of college students who, because they have failed to complete core general education courses, are not awarded a diploma even though they have completed their technical training. Students often fail to see the point of general education courses or their connection to their specialized training, not to mention the fact that technical education teachers and employers often consider them to be irrelevant. In our opinion, the introduction, under the renewal of college education, of a general education component specially designed for technical programs has, despite the misgivings expressed by teachers of the disciplines involved, resulted in a better integration of general and technical education. Without diluting course content or adapting courses slavishly to the various technical sectors, more down-to-earth teaching methods and cultural references that make sense for students must be introduced. At the secondary level, an extension of the technology-oriented path currently under trial (which focuses on technology to instil a desire to learn in students) is seen by some people as a means of ensuring the attainment of general education objectives. After several years, however, the trial results do not show any clear advantage over the traditional program in terms of persistence or graduation rates, although the students enrolled in the new program seem to be more motivated and diligent. They also seem to have acquired better personal discipline and a stronger sense of belonging and pride, and seem to be on better terms with their teachers.²⁶ These positive aspects should not be underestimated, even though the

pedagogical challenge has not been entirely met.

In *The State of Education in Québec*, we stated our misgivings about **the apprenticeship system** as it then stood. The characteristics of the new system, adopted in June 1996 by the Société québécoise de développement de la main-d'oeuvre (SQDM) and based on the involvement of sectorial committees, **make it a genuine alternative to school-based vocational education programs that should be encouraged.**²⁷ The system is based on a work-study format and is accessible to students after Secondary III. General education courses are given at school, and responsibility for specialized training is entrusted to business and industry. Approval of the skills taught in the program and certification are the responsibility of the MEQ and are identical to those for the school-based program. This avoids the problem of having a large number of locally-developed programs of varying quality and low transferability, which would do nothing to raise the profile of vocational education. In our view, **the apprenticeship system is a valid response to the need to diversify training methods by introducing a less academically oriented approach** that better reflects students' interests. We are also **reassured by the decision** of the SQDM **to implement the system gradually** since, in Québec, work-study programs and school-business collaboration are a relatively recent phenomenon and it is possible that, despite initial support, the system will meet with resistance when implemented.²⁸ The difficulties encountered by educational institutions, at both the secondary and college levels, in trying to find businesses to take responsibility for students leads us to believe that an extension of the program will be difficult.

Although school-business partnerships should be strengthened and businesses should be allowed to play a more active role in the area of vocational and technical education, **it would be a mistake to reduce the role of educational institutions to that of dispensers of theoretical knowledge**, leaving businesses (often reluctantly) to provide specialized training. Québec's educational institutions are better equipped than many businesses to meet training needs in many sectors. In this connection, we believe that a relevant and viable approach would be **to enrich the vocational and technical education dispensed in educational institutions by introducing work-study programs and providing students with access to varied learning experiences during on-site work periods.**

Like the Pagé committee,²⁹ we believe that secondary-level vocational education programs and college-level technical programs should, as far as possible, be designed as part of a continuum. Currently, graduates from secondary school vocational education programs who decide to go on to college-level studies must make a costly detour to complete their secondary school general education, and must also repeat part of their training since their previously acquired specialized vocational skills are not recognized. Making the secondary school vocational diploma an access ramp not only

for the labour market but also for further education would, in addition, help to raise the profile of the vocational education sector, since many students who lack the motivation to continue in the general education program nevertheless would like to study beyond the secondary level.³⁰ Integrated secondary- and college-level programs are currently being prepared by 14 consortiums made up of school boards and CEGEPs that have received authorization from the MEQ to prepare projects for experimental use beginning in September 1997. We support this new departure which, in addition, offers undeniable advantages in terms of the rationalization of program supply. It is advisable to begin with pilot projects that will provide us with valuable data before implementing a formula that, overall, appears promising, and **care must be taken to ensure the proper assessment of the experimental results**. The continuum should include the university level. Until now, most of the work to develop a technical education continuum has been carried out by the École de technologie supérieure. The new open-ended technical programs are one reason why 20 percent of college graduates from technical programs, originally designed as terminal programs, go on to study at the university level. We believe this inter-level coordination should be extended to other sectors.

The discussions held during the regional and provincial conferences revealed that, to avoid sabotaging efforts to raise the profile of the vocational education sector, the difference between vocational education programs and **individualized paths for learning** such as life skills and work skills education must be clear to all. Life skills and work skills education is designed for students who are unable to meet the general education requirements for admission into a vocational education program. **We believe that these programs to prepare students for entry onto the labour market in auxiliary positions should be maintained, but that they should not be assimilated with vocational education programs *per se*.**

The advisability of reintroducing short programs in which students could enrol earlier, perhaps after Secondary II, to prepare for semi-skilled trades, is less clear. Many people feel that a program to prepare students for positions situated between auxiliary functions and skilled occupations would revive the ghost of the much-criticized short vocational programs and should be avoided. Others are skeptical about the need for qualifications for and the employment prospects in the 200 or so trades identified by the MEQ that are not covered by secondary school vocational diploma programs and that would constitute the main outlet for the new short programs.

This niche in the training field is, in fact, occupied by **stage 2 of the experimental project to diversify vocational education paths**, field-tested in 40 school boards in 1995-1996.³¹ Programs are drawn up by the school boards, must meet a local need for employment defined in collaboration with the SQDM, and be prepared with the businesses concerned on the basis of the tasks and skills identified by the school boards. The skills involved in a given trade are learned in the workplace, and

evaluation is entrusted to the person who acts as supervisor, using evaluation instruments supplied by the school board. Courses in the language of instruction, second language and mathematics must be taught using MEQ programs. The experimental project has been under way for one year, and the participating school boards feel that it should be maintained. However, **doubts exist as to the validity of this approach to vocational qualification**, since most of the students in the project had, because of learning difficulties, been previously enrolled in individualized paths for learning and most of the teachers involved were special education and general education teachers rather than vocational education specialists. The report on the experimental project consists almost entirely of a description of the background to the project and gives no details on the skills acquired by students, students' and employers' satisfaction with the program, or the impact of the training on students' academic or professional careers. We consider that more care must be taken in selecting students and teachers in order to better reflect the objective of providing training for semi-skilled trades, and also that evaluation of this experimental project must be broadened.

At several regional conferences we heard comments, in particular from the English sector, about limited access due to the geographical distribution of service points and to admission quotas. As we pointed out in *The State of Education in Québec*, we believe that no education system can afford to neglect to adjust its training programs to foreseeable changes in the labour market, both in terms of the numbers of jobs available in a given field, and in terms of the types of jobs offered and the skills required to fill them. This implies that **we must invest in more refined planning methods**. Once these factors have been taken into account, we believe that **we must avoid making programs available solely on the basis of labour demand**. As certain participants pointed out, a work force that is overqualified for the immediate needs of the labour market is not necessarily doomed to unemployment or underemployment. It can also become the driving force behind job creation and regional development. It is clear that the **current mechanisms force many students from sparsely populated regions to study away from home** and, since the student financial assistance program does not cover all their expenses, they often end up with higher debt loads. The principles underlying the establishment of service points (the "map of options") seem to be too strongly influenced by a desire to rationalize and fail to take sufficient account of regional needs. They must be reviewed. **The needs of certain categories of students** must also be reconsidered. Providing access for **students with handicaps**, for example, involves adapting facilities, instructional materials and teaching methods. We support the idea that more attention must be paid to the career choices of **female students**, few of whom currently enrol in technology-related training programs.

Lastly, we would like to restate our conviction that **a permanent, properly trained teaching corps must be reestablished** in the vocational education sector, where two-thirds of teachers are currently on part-time or hourly contracts,³² in order to stimulate the development of local know-how with respect to program design, the review of

teaching methods and the establishment of new partnerships with employers.

- [26.](#) "La voie technologique: une mesure efficace pour contrer le décrochage scolaire," *Le Bus*, vol. 14, no. 1 (September 1996), p. 29; Ministère de l'Éducation, Direction de la recherche, "Observation du cheminement des élèves inscrits en Voie technologique durant la phase d'expérimentation (septembre 1990, 1991 et 1992)," Yves Brais (Québec, April 1995); Claudine Audet, *La concomitance de la formation générale et de la formation professionnelle au secondaire: exploration d'un nouveau mode d'organisation* (Québec: Conseil supérieur de l'éducation, 1996).
- [27.](#) Société québécoise de développement de la main-d'oeuvre, *Le régime d'apprentissage et ses caractéristiques* (Québec, June 1996).
- [28.](#) Claudine Audet, *L'alternance en formation professionnelle au secondaire: défis, limites et conditions de réalisation* (Sainte-Foy: Conseil supérieur de l'éducation, 1995).
- [29.](#) Groupe de travail sur la relance de la formation professionnelle des jeunes au secondaire et de la formation technique, *La formation professionnelle chez les jeunes: un défi à relever* (Québec: ministère de l'Éducation, 1995). [30.](#) Ministère de l'Éducation, Direction de la recherche, *La formation professionnelle du secondaire: une formation sans les jeunes?*, Michèle Violette (Québec, 1995).
- [31.](#) Ministère de l'Éducation, Direction générale de la formation professionnelle et technique, *Programme expérimental de diversification des voies offertes aux jeunes en formation professionnelle--Rapport d'évaluation préliminaire* (Québec, August 1996). See also Claudine Audet, *Vers un nouveau parcours de formation professionnelle au secondaire: contexte et enjeux* (Sainte-Foy: Conseil supérieur de l'éducation, 1995).
- [32.](#) Ministère de l'Éducation, *Les enseignantes et enseignants en formation professionnelle--Évaluation et perspectives de renouvellement*, J.C. Bousquet and R. Ouellette, Working Document (Québec, 1994).

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2.5 CARRY OUT THE NECESSARY REORGANIZATION TO BETTER MEET THE DEMAND FOR MASS HIGHER EDUCATION

In the 1980s, Québec entered the age of mass higher education. Over the last 20 years, student enrolment increased significantly both at the college and university levels, particularly early on in this period. Even though the university student population has since diminished slightly, the challenges posed by wider access to higher education still have to be met.

College

A reform of college education was undertaken three years ago. This reform was preceded by two years of public consultations under the leadership of the Conseil des collèges, the holding of parliamentary committees on the subject as well as reports produced by advisory bodies.³³ Even though all of these initiatives came to the same conclusion, i.e., that the college system was here to stay, the question of the relevance of this distinct level of education has been raised on numerous occasions, a fact which prompted us to include this issue in the debate. Our public consultation also led us to the same conclusion. In all the regions, conference participants reaffirmed the relevance of maintaining the college level. They see it as a means of facilitating access to higher education, especially in the regions. They consider that college is an essential transition period that allows students to mature, more particularly, to become autonomous in their studies, and to reflect on their academic and occupational future. The joint delivery of pre-university and technical programs, and core general education are seen as worthwhile features that should be preserved. As well, the current network set-up--which is said to ensure a certain equivalency of education and prevent costly overlaps in program development, for example--is perceived in a positive light. We endorse this view and propose that **the college system and its current characteristics, i.e., the joint delivery of technical and pre-university education, core general education and the network set-up, be maintained.**

It would be useful at this point to **review the main renewal measures that have been implemented to date. The general education curriculum** for pre-university and technical programs has been redefined and remodelled to provide all students with a better background. To ensure more uniform attainment of the standards and better integration of the different subjects that make up each program, **new provisions have been implemented:** program objectives are defined in terms of expected competencies before determining which subjects will be taught; standards are set by the MEQ; students write a final comprehensive examination in all programs and a terminal ministry examination in the language of instruction; and the MEQ may, at its discretion, establish terminal examinations in the other general education subjects.

Adjustments were made to general education courses and the program development process **to take into account differences between technical and pre-university programs**. To increase the number of students obtaining diplomas, remedial activities were made available for students who need them. **Concerted action with the levels of education below and above the college level has been undertaken**. For example, secondary-level vocational education programs and college-level technical programs have been rationalized and coordinated, and pre-university college programs and university programs have been harmonized. **By law, institutions are obliged to establish new, more formal and more transparent ways of accounting for the manner in which they carry out certain responsibilities**: legislation specifies the mandates of the new academic council (*Commission des études*) and the responsibilities of the board of governors as regards teaching, policies on the evaluation of learning, program development and evaluation, hiring, staff integration and performance appraisal. To top everything off, **an evaluation board** (*Commission d'évaluation*) with power of inquiry has been established; the role of this board is to evaluate each college's educational policies and programs of study and the actual teaching of these programs.

It is difficult for us to assess the actual effects of the mechanisms that have been implemented. Time must be allowed to play its part in the realization of such far-reaching changes. This is why **we do not venture to propose piecemeal changes, preferring not to jeopardize a reform process that has just begun**, whose aims and lines of action appear reasonable, and which has built-in self-adjusting features.

Nonetheless, we believe it is useful to underline **certain aspects which merit closer attention and are not explicitly dealt with in the current renewal measures**. We consider that geographical accessibility to education should be improved; that remedial activities should not take up an inordinate amount of energy that would end up overshadowing the educational mission of the college level; that students should be guided in their academic and career choices to prevent trial-and-error course selection, while maintaining the current flexibility of the system to avoid unfairly penalizing those who wish to switch programs; that bridges should be established between technical programs and corresponding university programs or the current three-year limit on the length of technical programs lifted in order to encourage students to continue their studies; that the needs of adults should be more adequately met; and that teachers' background in educational psychology should be improved. These expectations for the improvement of college education are discussed further in other sections of this chapter.

University

We must admit that the Commission's intentions to put everything on the table and to submit all aspects of the education system to public debate has received a rather

lukewarm response from many members of the university community, particularly administrators and professors. Several did not hesitate to call into question the credibility of this process. While recognizing the complexity of the situations to be analyzed, we feel that this level should be submitted to democratic debate since it is considered a public good and is more than 70 percent funded by the State. Furthermore, we have noted with satisfaction that as our consultation progressed, the university community became more actively involved in the debate. We also drew advantageously from the work of certain university researchers who have taken a critical look at current methods of organization and practices in universities.³⁴ If, in many cases, we are still far from finding solutions and even agreeing on the way reality is to be interpreted, we consider that at least we have made progress in defining the problems and clarifying the direction that any reform of the university system will take.

Like the participants in the regional and provincial conferences, we feel it is useful to emphasize the need **to maintain the three components of the university mission:** teaching, research and services to the community, as well as its role in providing critical analysis of all aspects of society. We believe it is necessary to review the principal problems for which solutions must be found.

First, it is clear that **teaching**, particularly at the undergraduate level, **does not receive the attention it deserves**. The fact that tenured professors tend to avoid teaching at this level to devote themselves to research and teaching at graduate levels--activities that are more in line with their research interests--is an indication of the low value placed on undergraduate education. As shown in the report of the Vérificateur général,³⁵ the average four-course teaching load tends to be perceived as a maximum. In actual fact, this load is reduced to an average of three courses in the case of professors who do research. This reduction does not result in a greater teaching load for professors who are not involved in research, but instead is compensated for by hiring lecturers. If professors tend to follow this model, it is because the existing structures not only allow but encourage them to do so. The little regard given to teaching experience and classroom performance when hiring, evaluating and promoting professors sends out a clear message: in order to ensure a successful career, it is better to devote one's energy to research and publishing than to teaching. This question is not new, but solutions still have to be found.

The little concern for training in educational psychology and the little support for pedagogical research are a natural consequence of this situation, with the result that the traditional lecture format is still prevalent and new teaching and learning technologies are seldom used in many fields. The **relative lack of concern for educational support** and student success is also a problem. It is no coincidence that those who take on a large part of the teaching load at the undergraduate level, namely

lecturers, are only partially integrated into the life of the institution. Similarly, programs as they are currently designed do not provide an adequate framework for guiding and supporting students in their academic careers. Now that university studies are accessible to more people, there is greater diversity in students' interests and backgrounds. The universities, however, do not seem to have adapted to this new reality. While admission criteria are not always stringent, at least in certain programs--because universities want to give motivated students a chance but also because the need for funding often translates into a competition for potential students--those who are less well-prepared for university find it difficult to succeed because they lack adequate support. This lax attitude could lead to a reexamination of certain gains made as a result of the democratization of education. Will university enrolment decrease in the long run if institutions continue to admit so many students who are ill-suited for higher education?

The situation of lecturers is representative of the way in which universities perceive their teaching mission and its link with research. Initially, lecturers were hired to ensure input by professionals and experts with careers outside the university, and to deal with fluctuations in the student population. At a time of budgetary restrictions when universities wished to continue offering the same programs (both to guarantee accessibility to students and to maintain funding, which is essentially based on the number of students) while maintaining or even decreasing faculty teaching loads, many institutions entrusted a large part of undergraduate teaching to lecturers. This shows that **reality is altogether inconsistent with talk about the need to integrate teaching and research and how they should be part and parcel of a professor's duties.** In actual fact, undergraduate teaching and research are largely separate and are carried out by two different types of staff with few professional ties between them. Another factor which has yet to be recognized is that not all professors are actively involved in research throughout their careers. **One may well ask why professors' work descriptions are so rigid and uniform.**

The obvious importance of the contribution of lecturers to undergraduate teaching calls for greater recognition of their role and efforts to integrate them into the life of the university. Although lecturers must have opportunities to become professors, it is rather unrealistic, given the current financial situation of universities, to think that all lecturers could become professors. It is also unlikely that the current number of professors is sufficient to provide teaching at all levels, which in any case would lead to the disappearance of lecturers. This could only be done by significantly increasing the number of students per class--a number that students already find too high--and the teaching load of professors, which appears somewhat unrealistic. We must therefore recognize that, at least in the short and medium terms and in a significant way in most universities, lecturers are here to stay. Furthermore, integrating them into the life of the university (participation in decision-making bodies at all levels, in program and course development, in pedagogical development and in

student supervision) is a means of improving the quality of education. The creation of an official "lecturer status" appears to be a viable solution in certain universities, but there is no single solution which would suit all institutions and all programs. Recognition of the role of lecturers does not, however, relieve universities of the job of **encouraging tenured professors to participate more fully in undergraduate teaching.**

As regards programs, it was pointed out in *The State of Education in Québec* that no consensus exists on the degree of specialization bachelor's programs are expected to provide. In this regard, **universities are faced with contradictory expectations:** professional corporations want programs that are geared to their specific needs; students do not want overly specialized training, but are nonetheless asking for programs that will make it easier for them to find jobs (this is understandable since most of them will not continue their studies beyond the bachelor's level); professors tend to view the undergraduate level as a preparatory stage for graduate studies. We had proposed that the undergraduate level consist of a basic core program followed by two options depending on whether students are preparing for professional practice or higher education. This proposal was not very popular. It appears that these expectations would be better addressed through **a combination of training aimed at giving students a broader base in their chosen field followed by a certain amount of specialization, with the basic training occurring at the start of the undergraduate program.**

University programs were criticized primarily for their lack of cohesiveness due to the way in which they are developed. It is said that programs all too often resemble course lists consistent with the fields of specialization and interests of professors rather than the competencies that would prepare students for the workplace. They reflect the individual preferences of professors rather than an organized educational strategy. Programs are far from being the products of coordinated educational activity and do little to promote integrated learning. In this respect, the department seems to be more a place where tasks are distributed than a place where teaching, research and services to the community are discussed.

Everyone concerned agreed on the need to rationalize program supply. The position of university administrators on this subject changed in the course of the hearings and conferences. First, they maintained that the budgetary context would automatically lead to the desired restructuring and that universities could reach an agreement amongst themselves in this regard. For their part, students demanded that the MEQ take more vigorous action or even that a joint structure be implemented to ensure that mandates and programs are divided up among the universities. At the provincial conference, the Conférence des recteurs et des principaux des universités (CREPUQ) proposed that a joint committee be set up to study the relevance of university programs and the extent to which they complement each other. We believe

this would be a good initiative, even though the proposed mandate falls far short of including all the aspects of university organization that would warrant more in-depth public examination.

We are also sensitive to concerns about greater flexibility in the supply of postsecondary programs. For example, from the moment that college and university programs are brought into line with each other--a number of participants agreed with the idea that college and university programs should be designed to fit into a five-year learning continuum--would it not be conceivable for students to do the first year of university at a college in their region? Although we must avoid disorganized program development and turf wars between the different levels of education (certain universities have branches in the regions), we nonetheless believe that these avenues merit consideration while keeping in mind the need to rationalize program supply and make education accessible.

Québec has chosen to entrust universities with an important mandate where research and technology transfer are concerned. Many universities are stepping up their research activities to compensate for the fact that little research is done in industry and in specialized institutes. **Most participants in the Estates General did not support the idea of having certain universities specialize in research and others in undergraduate teaching.** Instead, most of the participants said **they would prefer to see universities focus on their specialty areas in teaching and research** rather than focus on only one of the two or on only one level of studies. This appears to be the right choice at this stage in the development of Québec universities.

As mentioned in *The State of Education in Québec*, **we share the fears expressed** by both students and professors **regarding the risks of sponsored research that is too closely geared to the needs of industry**, to the detriment of basic research and applied research whose results can be reinvested in training activities. Whole spheres of human and social activity should not be neglected. In 1993-1994, nearly two-thirds (64.8 percent) of the funds invested in subsidized research were public funds--more than \$350 million.³⁶ **We do not believe that 100 percent public funding is the only way to guarantee the autonomy and independence of university research.** Rather, we should establish **a clear policy on research** to set out the requirements for university research activities (notably with respect to training future researchers), and clarify the social responsibility and obligations of companies and organizations that rely on universities for research or technology transfer. Universities are in the process of implementing policies on ethics. Moreover, these policies are starting to be part of the requirements of subsidizing bodies. We consider this to be a step in the right direction.

At the same time, each university must be attuned to the needs of its community, which does not mean that it must limit itself to its immediate environment. **The social**

and economic relevance of university research was questioned by several participants. If academics can for the most part vouch for the quality of research, thanks to peer evaluation, they are not always the best judges of its relevance. This issue will likely assume greater importance in the years to come, given that research is being conducted in many other organizations--colleges, institutes, government agencies, industrial laboratories--where the quality of the work is assessed by its relevance or usefulness.³⁷ In the context of the Estates General, certain community groups invited universities **to fulfil their mission of providing services to the community by conducting research that is relevant to ordinary citizens.** Given the current need for social solidarity, renewed attention should be paid to this concern which seems to have lost its importance over time.

The question of the accountability of university staff and universities has been brought to our attention many times, particularly by students. They deplore the fact that some professors who are involved in paid professional activities outside the university tend to neglect their teaching responsibilities. As pointed out by the Vérificateur général,³⁸ it is difficult to measure the scope of this problem since universities generally do not have the necessary information to assess whether outside activities interfere with a professor's duties. Universities do not adequately enforce the provisions in collective agreements requiring professors to declare these activities. We believe that **professors should be better supervised in their work and that it would be worthwhile studying the possibility of requiring them to work exclusively for their university.**

We consider that **accountability is an inevitable consequence of the public funding granted to universities.** University administrators maintain that existing mechanisms--whereby they publish management data, submit annual financial statements to the National Assembly, present a performance report and a report on development prospects to the parliamentary committee on education--are sufficient and that the autonomy of universities should be respected. We are of the opinion that these mechanisms, for the most part very recent, can ensure greater openness. However, **this does not exempt the CREPUQ from setting up an outside evaluation mechanism,** as proposed by the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation.³⁹ Without falling into the trap of excessive centralization, **the State should have leverage mechanisms, other than funding, that will allow it to participate in planning and policy-making at this level of education, thus ensuring better coordination of the university network.**

Given that there are still many questions to be discussed in greater detail, we propose that a **committee on the mission, organization and development of the university network** be set up. Its mandate would be to: a) examine means of ensuring that universities better fulfil their teaching mission, particularly with respect to the undergraduate level, and with a view to helping more students persist and succeed; b)

clarify the status and duties of staff hired to teach at the undergraduate level (in particular, professors and lecturers) by examining the relationship between teaching and research, among other things; c) reevaluate current undergraduate programs (goals, development methods, cohesiveness, continuity with college programs, approval mechanisms); d) support implementation of mechanisms geared to rationalizing program supply and ensuring that programs complement each other; e) examine ways of increasing the flexibility of supply so as to make university programs more accessible; f) determine guidelines for developing an overall policy on university research; g) examine the direction that services to the community should take in order to better meet social demands; h) evaluate existing mechanisms for ensuring internal and external university accountability, taking into account the universities' autonomy and the public's right to information about government spending; i) ensure that the principles and terms governing funding are consistent with the orientation of university activities.

Established by the MEQ, this joint committee would include members from the university milieu (administrators, professors, other staff, and students) and from the socioeconomic milieu. The committee would prepare a report for the Minister and the parties involved. This report should be submitted at the latest in June 1998.

[33.](#) Conseil des collèges, *L'enseignement collégial: des priorités pour un renouveau de la formation* (Québec, 1992); Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur et de la Science, *Preparing Québec Colleges for the 21st Century--Future Directions and Renewal Measures* (Québec, 1993); Conseil permanent de la jeunesse, *Une cure de jeunesse pour l'enseignement collégial* (Québec, 1992); Conseil supérieur de l'éducation, *L'enseignement supérieur: pour une entrée réussie dans le XXI^e siècle*, Advice to the Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education and Science (Sainte-Foy, 1992).

[34.](#) The work of the Équipe de recherche sur l'organisation de la fonction enseignement à l'université (EROFEU) was particularly useful to us: Denis Bertrand et al., *Doléances et demandes des étudiants universitaires à la Commission des États généraux sur l'éducation*, Working Document (n.p., May 1996); *Oser revoir les modes d'organisation de l'enseignement de premier cycle*, Essay (n.p., May 1996); *L'organisation de la fonction enseignement de premier cycle dans les universités québécoises francophones--témoignages d'étudiants et d'observateurs* (n.p., 1996); *L'université québécoise du troisième type--Dynamique vers l'an 2010*, Cahiers de la recherche sur l'enseignement supérieur (Montréal: Université du Québec, May 1995). See also Georges Leroux, "L'enseignement universitaire. Tensions et défis d'une tâche en mutation," in *25 ans de syndicalisme universitaire*, Syndicat des professeurs et professeures de l'Université du Québec à Montréal, Analyses et discussions, no. 5, Winter 1996, p. 153-175; Fernand Dumont, *Raisons communes*, Collection Papiers collés (Montréal: Boréal, 1995), p. 155-159; Conseil supérieur de l'éducation, *Réactualiser la mission universitaire*, Advice to the Minister of Education (Sainte-Foy, 1994).

- [35.](#) Vérificateur général, *Rapport du Vérificateur général à l'Assemblée Nationale pour l'année 1994-1995* (Québec, 1995), p. 204.
- [36.](#) Conseil supérieur de l'éducation, *Le financement des universités*, Advice to the Minister of Education (Sainte-Foy, 1996), p. 39.
- [37.](#) Michael Gibbons et al., *The New Production of Knowledge: The Dynamics of Science and Research in Contemporary Societies* (n.p., 1994).
- [38.](#) Vérificateur général, *Rapport 1994-1995*, p. 205.
- [39.](#) Conseil supérieur de l'éducation, *Le financement des universités*, p. 67.

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2.6 ESTABLISH A REAL CONTINUING EDUCATION SYSTEM

Thirty years ago, Québec set up an education system designed to enable young people to enter the modern world with fairly broad, diversified vocational and technical training that would allow them to change jobs as technology evolved. The system was also intended to enable adults to upgrade their occupational skills or undergo retraining in order to keep abreast of changes in society.

Considerable importance has been attached to continuing education in Québec, much more so than in many countries. Such services are not only widely available in schools, colleges and universities, but are also offered by businesses, associations, unions, volunteer popular education agencies, municipalities and the media, especially television. The original mandate of Radio-Québec was educational programming.

In general, continuing education has been developed in parallel with initial education in order to respond to the specific needs of adults. However, as of the 1970s, in the wake of the UNESCO report on education, i.e., the Faure Report, various groups began to talk about the principle of lifelong education, asserting it should serve as a basis for organizing the entire education system. In addition, the Jean Commission report proposed measures for achieving this objective. However, these proposals were deemed unrealistic and, in 1984, a policy statement and action plan for adult education, entitled *Continuing Education Program. Policy Statement and Plan of Action*, retained only a few provisions designed to foster the eventual establishment of a lifelong education system.

However, during the Estates General,⁴⁰ we noted that **what seemed unrealistic only a few years ago is now considered increasingly feasible by all parties concerned.** The exponential growth of knowledge and its rapid renewal show that people can no longer spend 20 years in school and then expect to earn a living for the rest of their life from the skills they acquired during that period. To master their environment, people are now obliged to undergo ongoing training. New production methods and approaches to the organization of work have fostered specific training needs in businesses, a trend not about to disappear. As a result, business leaders and labour unions are having to acknowledge the need for continuing education. In fact, they are increasingly prepared to finance such training and reorganize schedules to allow employees to participate in continuing education programs.

Both the education community and the business community thus recognize the need for ongoing training. This new reality is likely to foster the emergence of a culture of continuing education in society and place it on a firm footing. Conditions are ripe for continuing education to play a more tangible role in the education system

as a whole. Significant steps can and must be taken in this regard. We propose that **action be aimed at achieving three objectives: taking the principle of continuing education into account in initial training; recognizing the diversity of training venues; consolidating and introducing services geared to adults' needs.**

The basic curricula should reflect the fact that learning is a lifelong activity. Their primary purpose is to provide children and adolescents with the cultural tools they need to master their future in the complex world in which they will have to live. In teaching the subjects in the curricula, teachers must **ensure that students master basic concepts** that will serve as a basis for future learning. Methods and skills needed to learn alone must be included in the basic curricula. Efforts must also be devoted to helping very young children, even preschoolers, develop aptitudes, such as intellectual curiosity and a desire for the satisfaction derived from discovering and understanding, that will kindle their desire to continue learning. Children can develop an appetite for learning, just as they acquire a taste for beautiful things or outdoor activities.

Employers are willing to invest in training their employees, but not in the basic education provided by schools. However, basic skills are the foundation for occupational skills. All conference participants deplored the fact that the education system allows students to leave school at the end of the compulsory schooling period, even if they are functionally illiterate. All participants agreed that, for the sake of fairness to all members of society, free public services should be offered in basic education. Such services require even more support if they are to prepare young people to live in a knowledge-based society. To satisfy these needs effectively, we believe that **schools can no longer merely fulfil their obligation to provide students with compulsory educational services until they reach the age of 16. They must also be accountable for the results they achieve.** The essential knowledge and skills taught in basic education must be mastered by all students. Once they reach the upper age limit for compulsory school attendance, regardless of their level of schooling, students should be required to undergo an assessment aimed at determining whether they have attained the prescribed standards with respect to language (reading and writing), second language, mathematics, science and technology, personal and social education, and general skills. Special provisions should be established for students who, by age 16, have still not attained these standards.

Basing the education system on the principle of lifelong education **recognizes that education and training are also provided outside the education community.** Moreover, such recognition encourages students to acquire skills on an ongoing basis. Families, associations, community organizations, cultural institutions, the media and the workplace all play an educational role. Representatives from these sectors were present during the Estates General and offered to work with the school system. Today, when young people leave school, they enter this institutional network which is not part of the education system, but which, nevertheless, continues to train and educate them.

Therefore, students must be brought into contact with this non-academic network while they are still in school, a process that requires the cooperation of the institutions and players involved.

It is impossible for us to indicate here all the steps that must be taken to bring about such cooperation. However, to set the process in motion, we believe that its legitimacy and indispensability must be affirmed. Applying the principle of lifelong education is tantamount to securing the cooperation of all concerned.

Cooperation between schools and families is essential to ensuring that children acquire basic skills when they are very young. Special efforts must be made to enlist the active participation of families in underprivileged neighbourhoods and groups most affected by illiteracy problems to help them guide and supervise their children, whose chances of acquiring the basic skills essential to continuing education must not be jeopardized. Schools and labour unions have already worked out formal cooperation arrangements and often treat one another as equals. Similar relations do not exist, however, between schools and other associations involved in training, particularly **volunteer popular education agencies**. If we admit that people must be able to satisfy their training needs on a lifelong basis in order to take charge of their personal and community life, we must also acknowledge that these needs sometimes require solutions other than courses or the type of expertise schools can offer. In our opinion, it is high time **these popular education agencies were recognized** and their role and relationship with the education system clarified. **Effective cooperation between schools and the cultural community must be stepped up**, notably at the municipal level. Schools must recognize that they alone cannot develop students' taste for culture. On the other hand, they have a duty to kindle their desire to frequent cultural institutions later on in life.

Relations between the school system and the media are somewhat contentious. Schools often accuse the media of complicating and even undermining their educational role, while the media complain that schools use outmoded teaching methods. **The current development of new information and communications technologies may provide an opportunity for placing relations between these two institutions on a new footing.** These new technologies can be powerful training tools, and teachers will be asked to devote their expertise to defining what kind of information should be transmitted. In addition, schools may find these technologies useful for renewing their teaching practices. Relations between schools and the work world have improved significantly in recent years, given the important role that training can play in fostering economic growth. It has rapidly become obvious that businesses play a role in training, since working not only develops a person's expertise but provides him or her with an opportunity to learn. The recent consensus reached between management, labour, the SQDM and the MEQ regarding the introduction of apprenticeship training officially recognizes the educational role of the workplace. In

other words, **the education system recognizes the skills and knowledge acquired in the workplace.**

Considerable efforts have been devoted to setting up adult education services over the past 30 years. However, over the past decade, new training needs stemming from industrial restructuring have modified certain original objectives and even stifled certain initiatives on account of a lack of resources. In our opinion, we must renew our efforts in this sector, **especially in literacy,⁴¹ basic education, part-time vocational and technical training, and manpower training.** The fixed envelope allocated to basic education should be increased and steps taken to ensure that such education remains free of charge. Students should have access to part-time vocational training at the secondary level, while the envelope for part-time college-level training should be increased. Lastly, services for meeting manpower training needs should be developed in universities.

At each level of education, it must be clear that **adult education is not limited to job-related training and retraining.** Training needs stemming from the social, cultural and political changes that accompany the evolution of technology in the job market must be taken into consideration as well. Cultural enrichment, civic education and language training needs must also be met. Programs offered at all levels of education must reflect these needs. In addition, financing systems must not exclude them.

To reduce disparities and improve access to adult education, **distance education should make greater use of the new information technologies at all levels of education.** Financial support should be devoted to developing multimedia distance education networks. In our opinion, pooling the resources available at each level of education would be preferable to the current dispersal of such resources.

Two conditions must be satisfied to ensure the mobility of adults within the education system: they must be offered **sufficient information and counselling**, and steps must be taken to ensure **recognition of prior learning.**

Reception and referral services are already available. Efforts must be devoted to maintaining these services, consolidating their development within the education system, and improving counselling services. Certain participants in the regional and provincial conferences requested **the creation of a one-stop service point** for all levels of education, in connection with the training offered by both institutions and businesses. In accordance with a ministerial decision, such a service point was introduced around 12 years ago for the secondary and college levels in each region. Unfortunately, this initiative was not very successful. More recently, however, joint efforts involving the various levels of education in each region have been stepped up, particularly in vocational and technical education. As a result, conditions now seem

more conducive to the emergence of a one-stop service point. In our opinion, such a service is needed to help adults find their way around the education system and prevent them from having to engage in what they themselves called "comparison shopping."

The inevitable diversity of training profiles and venues requires the creation of equivalence and recognition systems that will clearly identify equivalent training for all concerned. Occupational skills and experience must be recognized by the school system. **Services for the recognition of prior learning** are already available at the secondary and college levels. However, current service levels are insufficient and **must be enhanced**. Expertise in the recognition of experiential learning and non-academic training has already been developed. Such expertise should be consolidated and developed even further. Since the recognition of prior learning is essential to improving access to continuing education and ensuring that adults persist, services must be introduced for this purpose in universities. In our opinion, admission on the basis of an age criterion--for example, that adults be 21 years of age and have pertinent experience--is incompatible with a more systematic approach involving the recognition of prior learning. Universities must also make an effort to grant equivalences for similar courses or programs taken elsewhere. Participants outlined a number of problems in this regard. Efforts should also be pursued to develop more effective tools, throughout the education system, for the recognition of immigrants' diplomas.

Some participants criticized the quality of certain secondary-level general education programs and university-level certificate programs. Although we do not intend to endorse all their criticisms, we believe they reflect the fact that **educational institutions devote less attention in adult education than in youth-sector education to certain aspects essential to providing quality training, such as educational support services and teachers' working conditions**. On account of their generally precarious position, adult education teachers have limited access to the in-service training and professional support available to other teachers. These problems are not adequately addressed by those in charge of institutions and adult education services. Correctives must be made, since these attitudes reflect the limited recognition accorded to adults in the education system.

Adult education has a long history in Québec. It has been marked not only by successful and innovative initiatives but also by setbacks. After 30 years, we now have a clearer picture of what we can and must do. In our opinion, this would be an opportune time for Québec to draft **a lifelong education policy**, given that major guiding principles must be defined for the education system and that, clearly, lifelong learning must be one of these principles. Although we hesitated to call for such a policy during the first stage of the Estates General, we now believe that one must be formulated. A consensus has been reached on the main objectives that might be

included in this policy: it could foster more coherent actions and organization of services and reflect the recognition of people's right to lifelong education.

[40.](#) See also Conseil supérieur de l'éducation, *Pour un accès réel des adultes à la formation continue*, Advice to the Minister of Education (Québec, 1996); Institut canadien d'éducation des adultes, *L'éducation des adultes, valeur centrale du progrès économique et culturel*, Summary of the regional and sectorial consultation on the future of adult education (Montréal: n.p., Octobre 30, 1995).

[41.](#) According to a comparative study conducted in seven countries, the percentage of adults with limited reading and writing skills is higher in Québec than in the other Canadian provinces and is the sixth highest when compared to the other countries surveyed. See ministère de l'Éducation, *The Cost and Results of Education, Making Choices Together: Taxation and Financing of Public Services Series*, no. 5 (Québec: ministère du Conseil exécutif, 1996), p. 66-68. In its *Plan national d'action en alphabétisation* (1996), the Regroupement des groupes populaires en alphabétisation du Québec proposed 42 measures which are to be included in a province-wide plan to combat illiteracy.

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2.7 SUPPORT THE MAIN PLAYERS TO PROMOTE EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS

The people most concerned by the renewal of education--the students themselves, whatever the level of education--emphasized the importance of certain factors in educational success.⁴² The factors mentioned were high standards that create a desire to learn and leave room for different learning methods, a sustained commitment to education supported by resources, a significant relationship with adults, opportunities to become involved in a concrete way in the school or the community, and reassertion of the importance of education. They are all important in ensuring that students do not view studying as something to do "in the meantime," but invest their energies daily in the task of being students, and consider this to be a form of social contribution.

The Commission would like to underline the recurrent nature and extent of the concerns expressed on the subject of student supervision and support. It feels that this should become an institutional responsibility at all levels of education, shared by all educators. Clearly, a great deal of effort has been devoted to this aspect in recent years, as illustrated by many of the presentations at the conferences and the interesting experiments that were described to us. From these discussions, a number of points stand out, including this: the principal site for supervision is the classroom, where the student-teacher relationship is primordial, where the teaching strategies used should allow individuals to progress in their learning, where the social skills of cooperation and mutual support must be developed as a part of educational activities, where students are entitled to make mistakes but receive support in remedial activities, where teaching staff have sufficient latitude to organize and vary their approaches, assessment methods and learning rates, and where they themselves can, where necessary, count on the support of other staff.

At the college level, program cohesiveness seems to be the supervision factor that provides the most structure. Convergence of objectives, a planned progression and formative evaluation give meaning to academic progress within programs and provide students with a sense of belonging to the institution. At the undergraduate university level, important factors for success include integration of program objectives and contact with faculty for whom teaching is a vital mission and who are supported in this by the university. However, it is clear that these factors are not always present.⁴³

Some supervision models were often identified as promoting a better student-teacher relationship, although not everyone agreed with this. Examples are the homeroom system in the first cycle of secondary school and tutoring in the second cycle. In addition, the practice of pairing or twinning younger students with older students often strengthens the motivation to study. Nevertheless, there was agreement on the fact that

no miracle formula exists. A variety of formulas should be implemented by institutions, to suit the age of the students and their promotions or transitions. Of particular importance are the first years of elementary and secondary school and the first terms at college and university. Each school team or program team should fulfil its responsibilities in this respect.

Extracurricular activities provide excellent opportunities for other types of learning, bringing a new perspective to academic progress and developing initiative and independence among students. Many people see them as an opportunity to gain experience that will subsequently be useful in defining career choices and social involvement. Such activities should be recognized for their educational contribution, instead of being relegated to the level of incidental pastimes. Student involvement in the organization of social life at school should be encouraged, so as to develop a sense of community and the skills required to live in society and contribute to democracy.

Institutions should also pay attention to student guidance and counselling. If secondary schools are able to offer a wide variety of options in the second cycle, this will provide an opportunity for students to test their preferences and develop their skills and career choices in ways other than under pressure from college prerequisites. Support for guidance and counselling, from the standpoint of schools which themselves play a guiding or counselling role, should also include the acquisition of proper working methods and the gradual mastery of tools for self-learning, especially in the first cycle of secondary school. However, activities aimed specifically at self-awareness and career choice should be included in the guidance and counselling services that play a vital role in building self-confidence, clarifying confused aspirations and reviving the commitment to study. Similarly, guidance is not a strictly school-based process, but is reinforced by significant contact with various social environments and people who perform professional activities, and by the gradual application of personal skills in less school-oriented contexts.

The Commission would also like **schools to use non-timetabled school time more profitably**, without necessarily increasing teaching time, in order to satisfy the real needs of students who would otherwise be left to themselves as far as their school work is concerned. It may be a question of providing equal opportunity for students who would not otherwise come into contact with an express belief that education is important, or of simply offering the chance to do homework with adequate support in an appropriate environment. We do not advocate the creation of a standard model. Each school should target its own interventions, calling where necessary on community resources, according to the characteristics and requirements of its own student population.

Finally, it emerged very clearly from the discussions at the conferences that **student supervision**, even when supported, as it must be, by an institutional policy, **is not the**

exclusive responsibility of schools. Although the school is a social environment for its students, it is not their only environment. When not at school, the youngsters live in a family, in a street, in a neighbourhood and in a village or city. They take part in leisure and consumer activities and hold paying jobs, mainly in the service sector. The suggestion that we design student supervision from a multi-sector standpoint throughout a given territory, and that the contribution and responsibility of all social players should not only be sought but made to correspond to that of the school, is therefore hardly surprising. The neighbourhood or village could become the basic unit, and an environment could be constructed where youngsters would find opportunities to develop. In this context, the Commission welcomes with interest the recent partnership agreement between the Centrale de l'enseignement du Québec (CEQ) and the Conseil du Patronat, aimed at restricting abuse related to paid work by young people under 16 years of age. We consider this to be a way of reasserting the importance of education and recognizing its demands on students.

Parents, for their part, in their capacity as the prime movers in their children's education, have asked for a broader role in the school decision-making process at the elementary, secondary and college levels. The Commission notes that there is a certain amount of unease concerning the place of parents in the school system, and believes that this should be overcome, not maintained. Parents often have the impression of being kept on the fringe of the more significant school activities, or relegated to a supporting role. They want greater recognition of their abilities. They are sometimes torn between the desire to be more interventionist at the individual level, and the desire to be more involved in school proceedings at the group level. The school staff, for their part, are worried that they will be required to submit professional strategies to the judgement of parents on a case-by-case basis. A *modus vivendi* is required which, although not perfect, would nevertheless lead to closer cooperation between these two vital parties in the educational process, while respecting the role and expertise of each.

As far as possible, **schools should give parents complete and regular information on the academic progress of their children.** The report card is not the only means of doing this. At the elementary level in particular, it would perhaps be useful to review the rules currently governing the number of report cards to be sent, in favour of an additional meeting with parents. Otherwise, the most promising option for combined effort seems to be for the two parties to learn to work together on school policies. The school project, as a means of clarifying roles and developing necessary compromises, should be concerned with "serious" issues, aimed at promoting student success. **This does not exclude the collective expression of the parents--on the contrary.** More deliberate action by committees composed of parents for parents, aimed at generating interest in school life, discussing parental responsibilities and developing parenting skills, would be a major and undeniable contribution to the school's progress. Parents should be able to call on school resources for this. Moreover, they have a right to understand the meaning of the reforms and educational strategies that affect the

academic progress of their children: in fact, their support for the changes and strategies depends on this. School improvement is achieved through the work of committees where schools and parents address problems together. However, the breaking-in period is never over; it must even be repeated year after year. It would perhaps be possible to avoid placing parents in a situation of powerlessness if their responsibilities in school proceedings were to involve an extended commitment.⁴⁴

The key to any renewal or improvement of our schools **lies largely in the hands of teachers and other school staff**. This is not a denial of the importance of the school and social environments, nor is it an attempt to reduce their resources to the level of simple props. Rather, it constitutes an acceptance that the most important and significant renewal efforts must be directed at the places where the staff work, and where the students receive their services.

We are currently entering a period when most of the teaching force will be replaced. This provides a welcome opportunity **to clarify the professional and human qualities that we expect of our teachers**, in a context where knowledge and sources of knowledge, as well as the needs of students, are proliferating, and where recent developments have taken place in the field of cognitive psychology, as we pointed out in *The State of Education in Québec*. In such a context, stringent requirements should be set for the recruiting of new teachers: first, a high level of general culture, acquired before admission to university, which will enable candidates to associate theoretical and practical knowledge with the major issues of education; good disciplinary skills (in this respect, the Commission believes that there is a need for systematic assessment of the quality of disciplinary training delivered since the teacher training program reform, once the first wave of students has graduated); a solid grounding in educational psychology, to guarantee knowledge of cognitive processes and class management strategies as well as integrated use of new information and communications technologies and documentary resources; human qualities such as tolerance, and the ability to communicate effectively; and a desire to renew their teaching practices through professional development. These same qualities should be sought at every level of education. They are consistent with the students' comments on what makes a good teacher: someone who communicates well, supports students, is sympathetic, knows his or her subject, and combines rigour with humour. We believe that teaching skills are acquired over the years, and that the acquisition process becomes much easier if teachers receive solid initial training. For this reason, we believe that training in educational psychology should be a hiring criterion for postsecondary teachers.

Such requirements, which should not be negotiable, mean that teacher training and certification must be reviewed to allow **the gradual, sustained integration of new teachers**.⁴⁵ This is an institutional responsibility, and also a valuable social investment in the quality of our education. **In our view, the cooperating school and**

mentoring approaches should be extended. In the first approach, universities and school bodies should work together to provide initial practical training and more extensive resources to new teachers. In the second, which amounts to job enrichment, practising teachers are trained to guide newcomers by transmitting their own experience and also by drawing on their own early teaching experiences. However, if formulas such as these are to work, practical training and professional integration must be carried out in partnership, with university resources visiting the teaching environment, and practical trainers being given the opportunity to influence decisions concerning the content of teacher training programs.

In future, the school networks must take a more serious approach to continuing education for their staff. It can no longer be reduced to a handful of activities on pedagogical days, as is currently the case at the elementary and secondary levels. Career-long professional development has become something of an inherent requirement in the teaching profession, and is necessary if the profession is to be developed. In their knowledge transmission and learning support roles, teachers must continuously develop their personal skills, adjust their strategies and make use of external expertise. This is the price to pay for professional autonomy. Whether by updating their knowledge, undertaking in-depth study, reflecting on teaching practices or talking with their colleagues, teachers must constantly obtain professional nourishment if they are to become more effective. In this respect, the Commission suggests that every school body should encourage its staff to specify their needs; provide access to a variety of training venues and methods and allow the necessary time; value professional development by peers and the use of practical expertise; engage in joint projects with different partners, including universities, and pursue clear goals of reinvesting in practice; and finally, ensure that training activities lead to a form of professional recognition. Temporary staff should also be included in such initiatives.

One of the methods of enriching teaching practice is to obtain **better cooperation between schools and universities**, between the theoretical and practical environments. An element that is beneficial in the teacher training context is **equally beneficial in the research context**. Many hopes were expressed in this respect during the conferences. Among these, the Commission retains the suggestion that exchanges between schools and universities should become more frequent, so that research results are more widely disseminated and have more impact on teaching. In *The State of Education in Québec*, educational research was described as the poor relation or the forgotten element. This is due to both the absence of a clear policy, and the lack of links between universities and schools. While it may be useful to consider creating an educational research fund along the lines of the social research fund, or regional action research funds, the Commission feels it is important to reassert the value of action research, through the creation of university-school partnerships which produce significant spin-off effects in terms of teaching strategies, the understanding of

phenomena, and the relevance of university training. Such approaches lead to transfer and reciprocity. Should we go so far as to create a provincial research and animation centre on the teaching profession?⁴⁶ Yes, undoubtedly, if it is operated and developed by a research resource group and an institutional partnership between researchers and practitioners.

Professional and support staff, who are the first to experience the effects of changes in school organization, are nevertheless often neglected in the process of change. However, they **want to be involved in achieving the educational mission**. Their relationships with students often enable them to play a complementary role in the educational process. They are also at the core of the flow of work and can help improve its effectiveness. It is therefore desirable that their contribution to the educational community should find expression, and that these individuals should also have access to professional development.

The Commission feels that **the pedagogical leadership of school principals should be intensified**. Given the broader responsibilities now held by institutional councils, school principals must acquire the skills to develop the school project, create links with the community and institute partnerships with school staff, parents and community representatives. They must also reinforce the professional autonomy of teachers, without viewing this as a loss of control on their part. Most people now agree that the quality of a school administration adds to the quality of the school itself, provided it can be both a driving force for change and a firm supporter of the individuals affected by the change. The Commission also believes that school principals should be recruited, trained and developed on the basis of these new skills. Responsibility for this lies with the school bodies.

Teachers, students, parents and other educational staff all have their own associations to defend their interests, promote their roles and develop their expertise. These various associations have been extremely active throughout the Estates General. They expect to be asked to contribute to the implementation of the reform. **The Commission would like the MEQ to support these associations, which are not all from the education community, in the appropriation and implementation of the reform.** The model that has emerged from the Estates General is a truly Québécois model, at both the regional and provincial levels--a convergence of energy that goes beyond corporatism and group interests. We should capitalize on this movement.

Educational innovation satisfies two major objectives in the education community: that of diversifying the system to enable it to respond to differing needs, and that of renewing teaching strategies. In the former case, **the Commission underscores the importance of alternative projects within schools, and alternative schools** as opposed to the more traditional model. These schools, which differ not in terms of student selection on enrolment, but in terms of the specific pedagogical

beliefs shared by the parents, school principals and teachers, generally favour student involvement in setting learning objectives, the development of student autonomy in day-to-day learning activities, and the constant integration of learning.⁴⁷ Parents are involved in school management--in fact, this is essential if the school is to function properly--and the basic paradigm is directed learning rather than teaching. Clearly, these schools, or these types of projects in schools, require considerable operational autonomy.

In the latter case, applicable to all Québec's schools, the Commission can only insist once again on the **importance** of better appropriation and integrated use **of new information and communications technologies**, which significantly redefine the concepts of learning and teaching. The conditions we consider essential if such an undertaking is to be successful--i.e., training and professional development of staff and the creation of cultural products suitable for education--are not always present. The MEQ should continue to play a leading role in this area, both in terms of orientations and funding.

In *The State of Education in Québec*, we deplored **the poor state of school libraries** and asked for a significant effort in this area. Here again, we strongly recommend joint action by the ministries concerned and, in the field, by school and municipal authorities, to give students and teachers access to the books and resources that are so vital to the educational process.

As regards **the difficulty experienced by anglophones in obtaining instructional materials in their own language**, we also suggested the possibility of creating a non-profit organization to be responsible for designing instructional materials. We still believe this is a valid hypothesis.

Finally, since this section is concerned with supporting all the players involved in achieving the educational mission, the Commission ventures to make some reflections on **the evaluation of educational quality**. This goes far beyond academic performance and assessment of the teaching staff, although these aspects are not excluded. It is an issue that is of concern to broad sectors of society, and was the subject of many of the students' comments. It cannot therefore be pushed aside. The college reform led to the creation of an evaluation board (*Commission d'évaluation*) whose role is to help the colleges maintain program quality. The school boards, however, are not in the same situation. They have much less latitude in terms of program content and implementation. Annual ministry examinations establish whether or not objectives have been achieved in the basic subjects, and tests prepared jointly by several countries serve as a basis for international comparisons. The elementary and secondary schools therefore do not need an accreditation body.

Moreover, the Commission believes that we should concentrate on **the development of professional autonomy for teachers, and give schools more responsibility for teaching**. These are both essential conditions for improving educational success. In the current division of power and responsibilities between the MEQ, the school boards and the schools, it is the school boards that are responsible for the quality of the educational services offered by schools. It is therefore up to them to develop more substantial evaluation policies for their schools that will give a better account of the factors that determine educational success. In the Commission's view, it would be appropriate to give impetus to the institutional evaluation movement, first by evaluating school board policies and their applications, and second by evaluating a certain number of schools through sampling, with a view to suggesting improvements and highlighting their strengths. Such a procedure would encourage everyone involved to develop an "evaluation culture" that would go beyond the academic results of students and the "performance" of specific elements in the system. We believe this type of procedure would increase the autonomy of teachers and institutions alike, by giving them a better grasp of the factors that determine success. During the conferences, requests for the creation of new structures were very rare. We suggest that legitimate demands for quality improvements would be well served by a **flexible institutional evaluation mechanism** not controlled by the MEQ or the school boards. This avenue seems to us to be more promising than the creation of a professional corporation.

[42.](#) On this topic, see Égide Royer et al., *L'ABC de la réussite scolaire*, published jointly by the Centrale de l'enseignement du Québec, Éditions St-Martin and the Centre de recherche et d'intervention sur la réussite scolaire (Montréal: Éditions St-Martin, 1995).

[43.](#) Efforts have been made in recent years to improve teaching at the postsecondary level. For a survey of these efforts, see Commission for the Estates General on Education, *La dynamique pédagogique à l'enseignement supérieur*, Diane Bonneville (Québec, July 1996).

[44.](#) For an assessment of the current situation as regards parent participation in existing structures, see Lise Giroux and Marie Blouin, *Rapport d'étude sur l'exercice des mandats du comité d'école et du conseil d'orientation* (Québec: Fédération des comités de parents de la province de Québec inc., 1996).

[45.](#) Ministère de l'Éducation, *La formation à l'enseignement. L'insertion professionnelle des nouvelles et des nouveaux enseignants. Orientation*, Working Document, (Québec, 1995); Ministère de l'Éducation, *Des professionnels en formation continue*, Video, 17 min 48 s.; Rémi Beaudoin, *Bilan des activités des tables de concertation du réseau des écoles associées de l'Université Laval pour l'année 1995-1996* (n.p., 1996).

[46.](#) This proposal was first made by the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation in its 1990-1991 annual report, *The Teaching Profession: For a Renewal of the Social Contract* (Sainte-Foy, 1991).

[47.](#) Richard Pallascio et al., *L'école alternative, un projet d'avenir* (Laval: Éditions Beauchemin, 1996).

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2.8 REDISTRIBUTE POWERS TO INCREASE LOCAL DECISION-MAKING CAPACITY AND OPENNESS TO THE COMMUNITY

In *The State of Education in Québec*, we deplored the high degree of centralization of the education system and the resulting negative effects on the involvement of players at all levels of the system. Consequently, we called for a change of course that would give front-line players a greater say in the organization of educational services so that they can tailor them to local characteristics and needs. We also argued that changes to the system would be welcome only to the extent that they gave schools greater control over their educational activities. In other words, decentralization was not to be a universal cure-all.

Participants in the provincial conference⁴⁸ concurred with these views and, at the same time, suggested that more room be made for contributions by social players from outside the education community *per se*. They also called for better coordination of educational services offered in a single territory.

The redistribution of responsibilities and powers should be guided by our desire for a fairer, more democratic and more egalitarian education system. Potential solutions should reflect a wider and better defined division of the tasks involved in ensuring educational success for all students as well as greater consideration for the diversity of the various milieus. However, participants were not in favour of a reconfiguration of the current structures, which, by giving more powers to the schools, would lead to a breakdown of the entire education system.

This is why, at the elementary and secondary levels, it would be better that **the State remain responsible for such aspects as the general orientations of the system, public funding and resource distribution, the basic school regulations, the budgetary rules and the negotiation of major money clauses (for example, salaries, fringe benefits, job security, pension plans, teaching time, teacher-student ratios), curricula and programs, provincial standards and examinations, the evaluation of the quality of teaching, and the delivery of certificates and diplomas.**

However, in the case of curriculum restructuring, the MEQ should be more concerned with orientation and leadership than with design and development.

While maintaining a **coordinating role** consistent with its responsibility of ensuring that the quality of education is uniform by setting common curricula, the MEQ should appoint a provincial committee to make recommendations on study programs. This committee should be composed of representatives from the various education milieus, but also of people outside the education field. Systematic recourse to the expertise of

researchers and professionals outside the education community would, in addition to streamlining the ministerial structure, serve to revitalize the system at all levels.

As regards management of the education system, participants expressed dissatisfaction with the fact that decisions are imposed from above through regulations, directives and detailed instructions. Instead, they would like to see a more flexible type of management. This would require the MEQ to reach agreements with the milieus on the basis of multi-year plans for the implementation of ministerial guidelines, to provide the necessary funding, and to evaluate the results according to preestablished criteria of equity and efficiency. **This approach appears to be the only way of giving schools more leeway while giving the regions more responsibilities. However, it also implies greater accountability.**

Conference participants reached a consensus on the validity and importance of having an intermediate level between the MEQ and the schools, notably to counterbalance excessive centralization and ensure equitable resource distribution among the schools. However, school boards were criticized for being too numerous, not open enough in their management practices and not representative enough. These criticisms prompted us to examine these three aspects further.

The only example in Québec of a decentralized political authority besides the school board is the municipality. However, municipalities have organized themselves into extended territories in order to develop common policies and implement solutions to common problems. These are the regional county municipalities, which are geographical and political structures that fall between single municipalities and the administrative region. **Having school board territories correspond to those of the regional county municipalities** would lead to a significant reduction in the number of school boards. Obviously, the territories of English school boards could not in every case coincide with the territories of the regional county municipalities. A different configuration would therefore have to be considered. It should be noted that the regional county municipalities are responsible for the development of a given territory and that having the same territorial boundaries would make it easier for schools and the local community service centres (CLSCs) to coordinate their efforts. It might also be a good idea to have school representatives sit on health and social services committees and vice versa. This type of arrangement could also include municipalities.

Once completed, **such an operation would make it possible to save on administrative costs** while ensuring the critical mass of resources needed to provide real choice with respect to educational services. However, a redefinition of the territories would not be the only, nor the most important, element of a regional reorganization of existing school boards. Reorganization alone would not be enough to guarantee better services. Because the intermediate level would be relatively

isolated from schools it would be necessary to design mechanisms to keep this level attuned to local concerns. Demands to **maintain universal suffrage** to elect representatives to the new boards of education or school boards should be understood in this light. It is in keeping with our democratic tradition to give citizens who pay taxes a say in how their money is spent, even if their contribution represents only a fraction of their property tax evaluation. School elections could be made to coincide with municipal elections (especially if the new school districts corresponded to the territory of the municipalities), based on a single electoral list.

Other requirements are needed to ensure that this new organization is democratic: for example, **mechanisms for consulting the population regularly** on proposals regarding educational services; official **mechanisms for consulting staff and students** on the implementation of policies that affect them; and **a mechanism for holding referenda on taxation.**

Should we go further in redefining the responsibilities of the school boards to ensure that they are more accountable and a vital part of a better education system? If so, the Education Act could be amended to oblige the new boards of education or school boards to prepare, for or after public consultation, a plan for implementing broad ministerial policies which would set out priority areas and intervention strategies, staffing plans, the distribution of educational, material and financial resources, and an equalization mechanism; to develop a policy on relations with the regional community; to negotiate a master policy on the organization of work in schools, once the MEQ has set out the general guidelines; to develop a policy on professional integration and development for all staff; to develop criteria for keeping village and neighbourhood schools open; to plan the integration of new technology in the schools; to prepare an evaluation, to be made public, of the activities under its responsibility, according to the initial plan and on the basis of predetermined indicators and evaluation instruments. These are all ways of **increasing responsibilities, ensuring that they are carried out democratically and requiring the accountability that would allow a given territory to make real choices in educational matters.**

As for the schools themselves, participants asked that they be more open to the needs of the community and to contributions by the community. On the other hand, many fear that schools might become battlegrounds where power struggles would take centre stage or where energies would be channelled into new administrative tasks. Furthermore, all players want their particular expertise to be recognized and want to be involved in decision-making. Schools' responsibilities and the contribution of players from the community should therefore be defined on the basis of student success targets.

Consequently, we deem it appropriate to increase community representation on the institutional council. This goal is consistent with the demands of social players whose

concerns are similar to or complement those of the schools. The parties involved would perhaps be able to channel their energies into necessary dialogue, which in any case would be facilitated. Also, the educational or school project should be a contract that sets out annual objectives with respect to student success, appropriate strategies, and institutional evaluation instruments, and that determines the nature of the community's contributions and how and when they will be integrated.

One of the strategies essential to student success is to have the institutional council adopt a policy on student support and supervision, including extracurricular activities and the use of time outside class time and outside school hours.

As for **other groups within the school**, it would be desirable if **their role on the institutional council were based on their specific expertise**, which should be recognized and supported. Thus, a parents' committee could advise the institutional council on the school's policies, but act autonomously in carrying out activities geared to sensitizing and educating parents. A teachers' committee could play a similar advisory role, but act autonomously when choosing instructional methods and approaches, textbooks, and methods for evaluating learning. In addition to its advisory function, a student council would maintain a certain amount of autonomy in organizing student life. Obviously, all of these groups would be represented on the institutional council, where discussions on the school's policies would also include community representatives. What we are proposing is that each group have real influence and an opportunity to voice their "expert advice" within the same body, while maintaining their autonomy and carrying out specific tasks.

Particular attention should also be paid to the negotiation of aspects relating to the organization of work, to the extent that these pertain to the conditions that promote student success in each school.

According to the different viewpoints expressed at the provincial conference, the organization of work is seen either as a way of realizing potential savings in the way educational services are dispensed, as an opportunity for providing staff with greater control over their work, thus reinforcing their professional autonomy, or as a way of functioning more effectively and ensuring a better quality of education.

The organization of work is part and parcel of a larger system and reflects a specific culture. It cannot be adopted ready-made. Even if it means learning from the experiences of other countries,⁴⁹ we must try to find, within the Québec context, a way of improving work organization so as to ensure student success.

In Québec, major issues are negotiated at the provincial level and, for the most part, procedural matters (referred to as "local arrangements") are negotiated at the regional

level. The parties involved in negotiations at the provincial level agree that we must continue discussions on the organization of work. The MEQ, the Fédération des commissions scolaires and associations of elementary and secondary school teachers recently concluded a partnership agreement, within the framework of new labour relations policies, to seek increased collective responsibility for the education system at all levels and to work towards its renewal in order to ensure its efficiency.

The Commission is in full agreement with this joint initiative and even suggests speeding up proceedings so **that each school can examine its work organization from two viewpoints: that of management**, i.e., the power to decide how available resources will be used, **and that of control of the educational process**, understood as commitment to one's work, the ability to be innovative and the resulting satisfaction.

As regards management, teachers and other categories of staff are demanding a real say in decision-making. This implies that all information be put on the table and that the decisions taken safeguard services to students as much as possible. Parents are allies in this regard. With respect to the educational process, teachers should have greater control over aspects that have an impact on educational activities: organization of the work week (35-hour span, 27-hour workload, teaching duties, remedial activities, student guidance and supervision); use of their time in school (daily schedule, periods of availability, pedagogical days, meetings with parents); use of students' time in school; formation of classes; scheduling of classes and remedial activities; evaluation of learning; and professional development.

Such a level of professional autonomy would inevitably lead to greater school staff involvement. However, it can be attained only with appropriate time and training. Where changes have been successful, they involved incentives, stemmed from pilot projects, and were based on appropriate training for school principals and teachers as well as greater parent participation, within the framework of the negotiated provisions. The call for greater involvement corresponds both to a new direction and a break with the past. On the one hand, it suggests that **the scope of application of existing collective agreements be specified** and, on the other hand, that **solutions be sought closer to where problems occur**.

Finally, how should we respond to oft-repeated demands for **better coordination of the supply of educational services in a given territory**? Inter-level coordination efforts should extend beyond the territorial reorganization suggested for the elementary and secondary levels. In order to promote regional development (a reference, in Québec, to the 16 administrative regions), it would be advisable to establish an inter-level coordinating body in each region. This body would include the new boards of education or school boards, the colleges in the region, the universities concerned and the MEQ. Its role would be to plan the supply of integrated vocational and technical programs, to lead or sponsor research on problems specific to the region,

or to organize action with regional and economic development bodies.

[48.](#) See also Commission for the Estates General on Education, "Partage des pouvoirs et des responsabilités--Éléments de comparaison internationale et canadienne," Francine Bédard-Hô (Québec: June 1996).

[49.](#) Christian Payeur, *Négocier et décider autrement en éducation. Quelques expériences syndicales américaines* (n.p., January 1995).

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2.9 CONTINUE MOVING TOWARDS A NON-CONFESSIONAL SYSTEM

Throughout the Estates General, the Commission chose to examine the issue of confessionality by looking at its different aspects. It first considered the organizational questions (i.e., the status of the school boards or schools, the appointment of associate deputy ministers for the Catholic and Protestant faiths, the Catholic and Protestant committees of the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation, the appointment of members to these committees according to their faith, the MEQ and the school board as the bodies in charge of overseeing religious and Christian education) then turned to religious education as it is dispensed in elementary and secondary schools, and its complement, pastoral animation.

This choice reflects the fact that **confessionality cuts across elementary and secondary school education** and that all its aspects are tightly locked together by a series of constitutional, legislative and regulatory provisions. For example, use of the exemption clause to extend the confessional educational project of a school to all its activities and students, regardless of their faith, is a consequence of the constitutional right of both Catholics and Protestants to have confessional schools, a right which must be protected if linguistic school boards are introduced.

The confessionality of the education system must also be examined from the standpoint of the cultural and democratic evolution of Québec society, with all that this implies in terms of real attachment to a tradition with underlying values and practices, and the desire to modernize our social blueprint based on other values and practices. In other words, can religion continue to be the foundation of the common blueprint in a pluralistic society where schools, in the interests of social cohesion, are required to be open to all students, whatever their differences and beliefs?

The State of Education in Québec went beyond the basic contrasting views expressed at the hearings to identify common interests. For example, it recognized the role of schools in teaching values, transmitting Québec's cultural heritage, and developing cultural knowledge of the religious phenomenon and religions as well as the individual need for spiritual growth. Discussions at the conferences did not change these convictions. On the contrary, what emerged was a concern that schools have taken no concrete steps to teach values, either in their academic programs or in school life in general. It is as though they had decided that the teaching of values was adequately addressed by religious education or pastoral animation, and that the confessional nature of the educational project, in both Catholic and Protestant schools, was a sufficient guarantee in this respect. This caused certain people to **express concern that abolition of the confessional system would absolve schools of the**

requirement to teach values.

The current provisions and mechanisms supporting the confessional system stipulate that the prevailing rule should be the choice of the majority of parents. However, these mechanisms are now confronted with **the hard-headed reality of a pluralistic, secular society and its plans to create schools that would accept all students** regardless of faith, ethnic or cultural origins, and parental religion. In such a context, what criteria should be used to establish the prevailing rule? This is a social choice that can no longer be postponed. Confessionality must be unlocked at all levels of the system, so that all students can be taught the shared values that we as a society wish to embrace.

First, we must **continue moving towards a non-confessional education system**--in other words, we must continue the separation of Church and State. There is now no reason, other than historical impediment, for confessional privilege to restrict the public education system. A fairly general consensus exists regarding the **transformation of confessional school boards into linguistic school boards**. The confessional structures have become an anachronism in two respects. First, they prevent the educational institutions of the French-speaking majority from achieving their mission of integrating all students, and second, they prevent the English-speaking minority from controlling its schools in accordance with its rights. We must therefore return to the source and untie the original knot. For this reason, a fairly broad movement has emerged in favour of amending or repealing section 93 of the Canadian Constitution.

According to the Kenniff Report,⁵⁰ the reform of Québec's educational structures would be greatly facilitated if section 93 were amended or repealed. However, its mandate did not allow it to make such a recommendation. Past attempts to create linguistic school boards under section 93 were therefore bound to result in a reinforcement of confessional mechanisms. The Supreme Court, in its consideration of Bill 107, did not attempt to protect specific legal structures but ruled that the right to have confessional schools includes the right to manage and control the confessional and non-confessional elements required to maintain the confessional nature of the schools.

The Proulx-Woehrling proposal⁵¹ claimed that a limited amendment to section 93 of the Constitution would be sufficient to allow the creation of linguistic school boards, while giving Montréal and Québec City the same status as the rest of the province in terms of confessionality. The Commission is not in a position to judge the validity and legal value of such a proposal. It merely notes that any solution along these lines would do nothing to solve the issue of confessional status for schools.

In order to maintain schools that are both confessional and all-inclusive, we must go against the Québec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms, which means, to an extent, subjecting the values of some citizens to the majority choice of others. Even if discreet, such an application of the confessional educational project, once included in the Education Act, is potentially discriminatory. We therefore believe that **the Québec government should adopt a procedure that will enable it to settle the issue of the confessional status of both school boards and schools**. Some believe that negotiations to **repeal section 93** are doomed to fail or will require time to achieve results. We should not forget that eight years have already gone by since Bill 107, providing for the creation of linguistic school boards, was adopted. According to some of the observations made at the conferences, it is little short of "surrealistic" that we are still talking about the same issues in the same terms on the eve of a new century.

We are aware of the real impact of such a decision, and the break with tradition that it would represent. However, we believe that the period of transition should not be extended unduly, since this might create ambiguity about the ultimate goals of deconfessionalization. We know that **the legal process will be long** and we believe that **the groups currently holding confessional guarantees should use this time to introduce mechanisms that**, with the cooperation of interested parents and the Churches, **will enable all Christian education to be dispensed in places more appropriate than the schools**, without the State being required to pay the costs.

However, schools must go further in their teaching of values. First, it would be relevant for them to develop cultural educational content related to the religious phenomenon. This question should be considered in relation to the restructuring of the curricula. Second, all students without exception should be offered values education that is neither artificial nor purely theoretical, but applicable in a tangible way in everyday life. It is from this standpoint that we should accept the request made by all groups for a **civics course** which would teach students about democratic practices, the rights and obligations contained in the Charters, codes and laws, individual responsibility, and solidarity. However, to prepare students for their roles as citizens, schools should also encourage **the development of civic life** within their walls, gradually involving all students. With this in mind, we believe that pastoral animation services should be converted into civic support services.

[50.](#) Advisory Committee on the Establishment of Linguistic School Boards, *Toward the Establishment of Linguistic School Boards*, Report Presented to the Minister of Education (Québec: ministère de l'Éducation, June 1994).

[51.](#) Jean-Pierre Proulx and José Woehrling, *Proposition de modification à l'article 93 de la Loi constitutionnelle de 1867 en vertu de l'article 43 de la Loi constitutionnelle de 1982*

(Montréal: Université de Montréal, March 1996).

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2.10 GUARANTEE FUNDING TO ACHIEVE OUR EDUCATIONAL GOALS

The entire Estates General process was coloured by the current crisis in public financing and the fears it has generated. As an unprecedented cloud of budget cutbacks gathered on the horizon, some people expressed doubts about our collective ability to make the changes required, others about the existence of a political will to do so. Many deplored the cutbacks already made to their services, claiming that they were underfunded and requesting additional subsidies. Nearly all groups took advantage of the opportunity to point out that education is not an expense but an investment. However, in addition to this type of intervention, legitimate in the circumstances, some new thoughts about educational funding were also expressed, representing a break with traditional category-based claims.

For example, **everyone agrees that education expenses, although a priority, are just one of a range of social investments.** This, however, is an admission that the amount of funding for education cannot be established simply from the demands of those who benefit. Everyone agrees that **collective spending on education cannot be separated from collective wealth.** This, however, is an admission that we can try to measure our collective effort by comparing it with spending by countries with similar standards of living. Everyone agrees that **education is an investment.** This, however, constitutes an acceptance that returns and productivity are legitimate issues in the field of education. Almost everyone agrees that **the education community will have to find new ways to do more with less.** This, however, constitutes an acceptance that priorities should be established, even if the responsibility of budget adjudication is left to others. The door is ajar, but people are hesitant to embark on a road to the unknown. In the circumstances, we did not expect the players to show their hands fully, but we ourselves must be bolder.

Québec is one of the societies that invests the most in education. In 1994, spending on education represented 8.5 percent of its gross domestic product (GDP), compared with 7 percent in Ontario and 7.5 percent in the United States. The main reason for this difference is the lower level of collective wealth (measured as per capita GDP) in Québec, compared with Ontario and the United States.⁵² Since growth in collective wealth is linked to spending on education, we believe **the present overall level of spending should be maintained.**

But should the current division of spending between the various segments of the education system be maintained? Let us look at the figures. The share of GDP currently allocated to elementary and secondary education is the same in Québec as in Ontario (4.8 percent), and slightly more than in the United States (4.4 percent). It was

higher 15 years ago, but budget rationalization has reduced the gap. On the other hand, the share of GDP currently allocated to university education is higher in Québec (1.93 percent) than in Ontario (1.27 percent). In 1976 it was more or less the same, but in subsequent years the relative financial outlay increased in Québec and decreased in Ontario. However, comparative figures are not the only factors to be used in deciding where funding should go. Most people agree that there is a relationship between spending on postsecondary education and economic development, and this could be used to justify the differences between Québec and Ontario in terms of expenditure on the various levels of education.

The notion of social return should be used to establish which segments of the education system should have priority.⁵³ This means more than a purely fiscal return. Clearly, fiscal return increases with level of education, and the universities produce the highest fiscal return. Moreover, better-educated people tend to make fewer welfare and unemployment insurance claims. But can we really look at issues such as this from a purely fiscal standpoint, without considering the goals of social justice? A compulsory education system, open to all, was created to provide equality of opportunity. Our education system should guarantee success for all in basic schooling, and not just access for all. **Funding should be devoted first and foremost to this general aim, at the level of early childhood services, at the elementary and secondary levels, for young people and adults, and in literacy and general education programs.** This type of expenditure has a much greater potential for fairness, and the economic benefits for society are far from inconsiderable. Under the same principle, funding for schools and school boards should be regulated by **equalization measures that reflect socioeconomic conditions and sensitive neighbourhoods or regions where social and family frameworks are defective.** Today, society separates those who know from those who do not, and excludes the latter. Schools, the instruments of equal opportunity, should not allow themselves to become the instruments of inequality. To allow them to accomplish their mission in this respect, and for reasons of fairness, unequal resources should be granted to reflect unequal situations. However, we do not believe there is a direct correlation between higher expenditure and greater academic success. Other conditions are also required. These include autonomy at the local level, accountability for results, division of schools into small units, flexible timetables, adequate facilities, and so on.

In periods of financial austerity and cutbacks, we believe that **basic education should be protected.** We therefore feel that **the percentage of private funding for higher education should be increased.** The cost of mass higher education is increasing constantly, and the tendency worldwide is to seek more private funding. **However, we do not think it is necessary (at least for the next five years) to introduce tuition fees for full-time college students.** Efforts to improve access to college education, and thus to university education, should be maintained. It will be some years before a college education becomes the norm for the majority. At the **university** level too, we

doubt that students will be able to absorb another increase in tuition fees, and are concerned that such an increase may threaten access. We believe that rationalization should be carried out before any increase in tuition fees is considered. Even then, **increasing fees should be seen as a last resort.** In our view, although there are many different hypotheses concerning the effects of such increases, no real study of their true impacts has yet been made. **In the private education sector, the percentage of private funding from parents or other sources must be increased** to compensate for the reduction in public funding to subsidized schools in the private network. **The compulsory 1-percent-of-payroll contribution to manpower training should be a minimum for businesses,** and should gradually be increased to support the growing demand for adult education services.

The growing demand for educational resources is due mainly to the transformation of the higher education system into a mass system, and to a growing need for continuing education. This situation, one of the features of a knowledge-based society, is here to stay. Funding systems and the supply of services must be adapted to a context in which more people will attend higher education institutions at different stages of their lives. We must accept that the cost of education beyond the compulsory limit can no longer be paid entirely out of public funds. **Private funding should therefore be promoted and stimulated.** However, the range of people pursuing postsecondary studies and the timing of their studies will tend to diversify with the years. The incentives for private funding should therefore attempt to reconcile the principle of equal opportunity with this diversity. To help those wishing to return to school, **education savings plans** should be generalized, with tax benefits to facilitate the process. **Tax incentives** should be introduced to encourage investment in training by businesses.

We have chosen here to concentrate on the general principles of funding for education. We believe that most of these principles will be acceptable to most of the individuals and groups who took part in the Estates General--or at least, to those who did not want basic education to be sacrificed for any consideration, to those who requested special attention for people in difficulty and the socially disadvantaged, and to those who wanted the new realities of continuing education to be taken into account. However, the proposals for a larger contribution from private enterprise to pay for adult education, and from parents to pay for private schools, will not receive unanimous support. Nevertheless, they seem to us to be valid.

We have decided not to address the more technical problems associated with funding methods, or the rationalizations required to reduce duplication, or the financial benefits to be gained from investing in new information and communications technologies to satisfy certain educational needs. **We feel the education community has already taken charge of these issues, and believe it is more useful to identify general principles to guide future budget choices for education, in harmony with**

the educational goals outlined above.

[52.](#) Ministère de l'Éducation, *The Cost and Results of Education*, p. 74-84.

[53.](#) Commission for the Estates General on Education, "Fiche de recherche sur le rendement social des études," Francine Bédard-Hô, 1996. [Contents](#)

CONCLUSION

In this report, the closing stage of our work, we have considered new possibilities, pointed out urgent needs, and suggested a number of priority actions. We believe we have taken our mandate as far as we possibly could, with the help of partners who will now play a pivotal role in implementing the proposed reform.

We will soon be getting the first indications as to the scope of possible change and the goals we should pursue. Political decisions are forthcoming as the main social players convene to discuss complex issues.

Beyond the economic summit to be held in the fall and any impact it may have on education in Québec, men and women who are interested and involved in education in several capacities--as students, parents, teachers, principals, administrators, instructors, researchers, and employers--will wonder if the Estates General have served a purpose. Our response is that, regardless of the context, the outcome of the Estates General depends on them.

For this very reason, the government must establish a follow-up mechanism to maintain the current level of mobilization. This mechanism should extend to networks and even institutions and provide for the collaboration of stakeholders in plotting courses of action, adopting strategies, and setting deadlines. We believe that more will be accomplished this way than if, each with our own concerns, we waited until the time, the opportunity or the means to take action became available. In our experience, even when situations seem to have reached a deadlock, calling on all to do their share is still the most effective solution.

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APPENDIX 1

Dissident Opinion Concerning the Educational Mission

In *The State of Education in Québec*, the Commission laid out three dimensions of the educational mission: instruction, socialization, and preparation for the exercise of various roles in society. The Commission also put forward the proposition that the ultimate goal of education in Québec should be recentered on the objective of instruction (i.e., the transmission of knowledge and culture), as opposed to the goal entrenched in the current legislation (the overall personal development of each student).

At the regional conferences, this "recentering" was widely contested by participants who wished to see the ultimate goal of education defined more along the lines of "overall development." As a result, the Commission has retreated from its affirmation of instruction as the foremost purpose of the educational undertaking.

Although the choice of the word "instruction" is perhaps unfortunate--"education" would have been a more appropriate term, since it places instructional activities within the context of the student-teacher relationship and an appropriate setting--the concept of instruction, as opposed to socialization and overall development, should be retained as the ultimate goal of the educational enterprise. When education is dispensed in a favourable environment (serene classrooms in institutions inhabited by a community invested with the same mission), overall development ensues as a matter of course. Metaphorically speaking, overall development is as elusive as love: when pursued for its own sake, it is not to be found.

It is essential that the unique characteristic of our schools as social institutions be preserved, and that schools be defined on the basis of their ultimate goal, namely, education. This would provide us with a criterion to separate what is essential from what is non-essential. For instance, once it has been accepted that education necessarily involves a student-teacher relationship and the conditions conducive to its development, the answers to several questions relating to education are more readily available.

These questions include all those relating to the importance given to various subjects, the material environment in which education takes place, and the autonomy of teachers and institutions. Take, for example, the question of whether or not enriched streams should be set up for those students who are able to take advantage of them. If instruction is seen to be the ultimate purpose of education, only one answer is possible

and it is yes.

Choosing education as our ultimate goal also protects us from the influence of certain ideological pretensions that go beyond what has been accepted and internalized by society itself. For example, Québec civil society expects that schools must not only transmit knowledge and culture, but also convey the importance of justice, equity and democracy. On the other hand, it is not part of our political culture to promote the ideal of an egalitarian society (where "egalitarian" designates equal condition). Rather, our ideals are those of equality before the law and equal opportunity. The promotion of a "more egalitarian society" in schools is therefore an imposition by the education system on civil society as a whole, and is not justified if instruction is the ultimate educational goal.

In addition, by giving schools a specific ultimate goal that is unique and intrinsically linked to their very existence as institutions, protection is provided against the debilitating effects of pursuing too many goals, or a single goal that is too broadly defined (such as "overall development"). In a context where the goal of overall development prevails, it becomes impossible to justify the exclusion from our schools of students who show no interest in learning, and indeed are totally unreceptive, especially when all kinds of specialists in various aspects of "overall development" (social workers, psychologists, and all manner of counsellors) are on hand to proffer their services. The problem is that, in the long term, these specialists use up resources that ought to be devoted to actual education. Our present-day schools thus manage to produce graduates who are apparently "well-adjusted" but unable to read and write, and who will consequently end up as passive onlookers rather than active participants in society.

The importance of establishing reliable reference points (the expected result of a "recentering" of the educational enterprise) becomes even more evident when we consider the qualitative change that has taken place, in the last five years or so, in young people's attitudes towards adults. This is reflected in the growing numbers of students with behavioural problems, a situation which creates extremely difficult conditions for teachers, especially new teachers. Teachers must be given the means to educate and must not be reduced to the role of "classroom behaviour managers" or, even worse, "hallway supervisors."

Lastly, given the fact that the State cannot educate (i.e., dispense educational services directly) without finding itself in a position where its own political goals overshadow educational ends, civil society must avoid relying exclusively on the State for the implementation of educational services. The State should, however, in the public interest, continue to oversee and support the institutions that do carry out that role.

Dissident Opinion Concerning Private Schools Deemed to Be in the Public Interest

There is still a widespread tendency to portray private schools deemed to be in the public interest as an obstacle to the proper operation of the public education system, rather than to see the growing numbers of students in this semi-public system as an indication that the public system (especially the secondary level) is seen in a negative light.

According to many observers, this negative evaluation is based on the fact that the semi-public system achieves better results with less resources (at least in some locales). If this is, in fact, the case--and in light of the available data it is hard to claim otherwise--it should be ascribed to the perverse effects of a state monopoly, rather than to a lack of resources in the public sector or to the nature of its clientele.

Throughout the western world, a search is on for institutional arrangements that would counteract the perverse effects of state monopoly in public education. "Charter schools," "traditional schools" and specialized schools, supported entirely by public funding, are being set up to this end.

In Québec, the semi-public sector already includes schools that operate along the lines of "charter schools" and "traditional schools," at only half the cost (to the taxpayer) of similar schools in other jurisdictions; moreover, they remain highly accessible. The current level of funding for private schools deemed to be in the public interest corresponds to 57 percent of the equivalent cost in the public sector. Since these schools receive half the funding of comparable schools in the public sector, we refer to them as "semi-public" schools.

We should build on what we already have. It would be folly to destroy the social capital these institutions represent (and they really are "institutions," rather than mere "establishments"), only to find ourselves, once western educational fashions have caught up with us, in the situation of having to rebuild from the ground up at tremendous expense. Incidentally, per-student operating costs in the Québec semi-public sector are 20 percent lower than in the public sector (in round figures, \$4 800 versus \$5 900 at the secondary level).

It has been suggested that public infrastructures are currently underused, but is this the responsibility of the semi-public sector? Might it be that one of the reasons for the success of the semi-public sector lies in its smaller-scale infrastructures? Whatever the level of infrastructure use, teachers' salaries are the major operating cost in both the public and the semi-public sectors. If students, at some point in the future, were moved from the semi-public sector to the public sector, that cost would have to be

covered entirely by the State. The contention that the semi-public sector drains funding from the public sector does not stand up to scrutiny.

Another argument has been advanced that, in our opinion, carries much more weight. It is to the effect that the semi-public sector, by attracting the best students and failing to provide for the more difficult cases, impoverishes the public sector culturally and makes its task more difficult. However, given present-day population trends, the so-called "creaming off" by semi-public schools has practically ceased outside major urban areas. A decreasing student base has put semi-public schools outside Montréal and Québec City in the position of accepting almost all applicants.

With regard to students who show little interest for their studies and who end up in the public system after being expelled from a semi-public school, two points need to be made. First, such students are being transferred in both directions; and, second, if public schools were pursuing the goal they should be pursuing, they too would be expelling these students. In response to questions such as "But what will happen to the students? We can't just leave them to roam the streets," we reply: younger students should be returned to their parents, and older students should be found valid educational pursuits outside the regular school system. With regard to handicapped students, the semi-public sector made it clear during the hearings that it was willing to take responsibility for more of these students provided it was given funding comparable to that made available to the public sector.

The debate surrounding the semi-public sector has also raised questions about the effects of competition between the two sectors. Some observers feel that the competition is unfair, since the semi-public sector does not have the same obligations as the public sector. This is true; however, the answer surely lies in challenging the semi-public sector to share those obligations by providing it with comparable funding for the students concerned.

With regard to the problem of young people aged between 14 and 16 (i.e., approaching the end of their compulsory schooling) who are simply unwilling to make an effort, we suggest that the present age limit for compulsory school attendance should be abolished. The current limit is something of an illusion, since students who fail to comply with it (and there are many) no longer have to face any kind of sanction.

The supporters of the semi-public system have pointed out that competition leads to emulation. After having observed the education scene in Québec for a quarter of a century, we can only conclude that emulation is indeed an operative factor, and in both directions. The influence of the "international baccalaureate" on the "integrated diploma of college studies" is a case in point. This should come as no surprise; there is no reason why the world of education should be the only sector of activity in which

the deleterious effects of a monopoly are not felt.

* * *

Let us return to the argument of those who support a withdrawal of state funding from the semi-public sector on the grounds that semi-public schools are detrimental to public schools. Even if this were true, surely it would now be up to public schools to justify their performance. After all, they have had the benefit of better material resources and a higher status as the state-sanctioned system for 20 years. If public schools are unable to put their affairs in order within the next ten years, perhaps it will be time to consider setting up "public-interest private schools" for all students, using mechanisms such as "education vouchers."

* * *

However, we must not lose sight of the fact that the major issue at stake in this debate is one of social justice. Should we accept a situation in which only the rich have access to an alternative to a public school system that is suffering from the perverse effects of a quasi state monopoly? Today, throughout Québec, parents have access to an alternative system that costs between \$500 and \$1 000 in the regions and \$1 000 and \$1 500 in Montréal and Québec. These parents are often of limited means (they perhaps save their money instead of buying lottery tickets). The fact that, during the hearings, there was no widespread criticism of the semi-public school system perhaps reflects the fact that the general public is grateful for the existence of an alternative system.

* * *

There remains the question of maintaining a level of social cohesion within Québec, a question closely linked to the fact that Québec has an obligation to provide for its own future as a society. Following the collapse of the Church, the weakening of family units, the penetration of market forces into the social fabric, and the unsettling effects of electronic media, it is possible that elementary schools, which still operate effectively and where civil society still exercises a measure of control, constitute the only remaining place in which the required social cohesion has any chance of emerging.

As a result, the question of semi-public schools should perhaps be evaluated differently, depending on whether elementary or secondary schools are involved. The question of semi-public ethnic schools for Jewish, Armenian, Greek and Muslim children, among others, also calls for closer examination. Should appropriate limits be applied, in the public interest, or should a moratorium be imposed in such cases?

Subject to the latter two considerations, we propose that a stable funding rate for the semi-public sector ("public-interest private schools") be set at 60 percent of the equivalent public-sector cost.

Dissident Opinion Concerning Teacher Training

The competence of a teacher lies in his or her ability to create and sustain a student-teacher relationship, the quality of his or her teacher training and, last but not least, the confidence that comes from mastering the subject he or she teaches.

The situation in today's classrooms is intrinsically difficult as a result of the qualitative change in young people's attitudes towards adults over the last five to ten years. Young teachers cannot be expected to begin their work as professional educators without adequate knowledge of the subjects they are to teach. The preparation of new teachers would be considerably improved, it is perhaps worth mentioning, if those who prepare them for their career (i.e., education faculty professors) spent a little more time in today's schools.

The new four-year teacher training program, which requires prospective teachers to acquire skills in two different subjects in order to teach in secondary schools, does not provide a sufficient guarantee in this respect. Under the new program, students must accumulate 60 credits in two main subjects: 45 credits in their "major" subject and 15 credits in their "minor" subject. We believe that a specialized bachelor's degree in a single subject should be the prerequisite for teacher certification, especially since tens of thousands of young Quebecers already have this qualification, and many of them undoubtedly have the personal abilities needed to become teachers. They should be allowed to acquire training as teachers in less than two years, and then given a five-year contract during which they would be expected to demonstrate their suitability for the profession.

Given that the students in the new program will be awarded a teaching certificate automatically upon graduating, since there will no longer be any kind of probation period, we propose that the certificates be valid for a five-year period, rather than for life. This approach, already adopted in several other jurisdictions, would have the advantage of encouraging teachers to take part in ongoing professional development. This would perhaps in turn require university education faculties to remain in contact with newly trained teachers as they face the realities of today's classrooms.

Dissident Opinion Concerning Teacher Evaluation and the

Powers of the New "Institutional Councils"

Early on in the hearings, many participants stressed the fact that decision-making centres are too far from the schools, and suggested that this could be one of the underlying causes of the problems in our education system. In support of this contention, some pointed to the beneficial results of dismantling the regional school boards set up in the 1960s. The Commission, in *The State of Education in Québec*, noted approvingly this call for a devolution of responsibility--in other words, powers and accountability--to the schools.

The proposed "institutional councils" would not, in our view, constitute an adequate response. Schools cannot be held responsible for their performance if they have no say in the hiring of their teachers. We therefore propose that the name "institutional council" be changed to "school council," and that school committees and orientation committees cease to have legal standings. Each new "school council" would have the power to make decisions concerning the hiring and retention of teachers in the school concerned. It would consist of three teachers, three parents, the school principal, the school commissioner, one student (in secondary schools) and a representative of the local municipality. The presence of a municipal representative is in response to the observation made several times during the hearings (and reiterated by the Commission in *The State of Education in Québec*) concerning the necessity of ensuring that schools reestablish links with the local community, especially via municipal and community organizations, with a view to sharing material and human resources.

In this regard, there is no reason why school councils could not channel the untapped social potential of those in the 50-65 age group towards their school. These people are often well-off, in generally good health, and have time to spare: they would, in many cases, be only too glad to share the task of providing support and leadership for extracurricular activities. For example, they could help keep schools open at the end of the day or accompany students on visits to local businesses, thereby improving the quality of their grandchildren's education.

Thanks to this type of community involvement, civil society might gradually regain a level of legitimate control over schools and thus keep in check the power of the State which, inevitably influenced by its own political ends, often undermines the pursuit of strictly educational objectives.

* * *

In its report, the Commission proposed that schools be subject to institutional evaluation. It thus sidestepped the question of teachers' working conditions, not to mention the question of the degree of autonomy enjoyed, or not, by teachers and the

matter of individual teacher evaluation. Given that the question of evaluation was one of the major concerns expressed by the general public (especially students) throughout the Estates General process, and that other mechanisms, apart from those recommended by the Commission, were proposed (such as the establishment of a professional corporation, the abolition of the collective bargaining agreement and five-year contracts for teachers), we feel it is necessary to make an alternative proposal.

There can be no doubt that the status of the teachers in our elementary and secondary schools should be improved. Since all teachers must, in establishing the student-teacher relationships so vital to education, act in their capacity as professionals (meaning that they must be individually and directly responsible for the way in which they perform their duties), we consider that collective evaluation, however stimulating or interesting it might prove to be, is not a sufficient means of evaluation.

Furthermore, if teachers are to act as professionals, they need a level of autonomy that the constraints currently imposed by the MEQ and CEQ render impossible. We would like to see the MEQ devolve more powers to school teams; we also believe that an assessment of the results obtained, in place of the method currently used, would result in a higher level of professional autonomy.

Moreover, the experiences of the last 30 years have demonstrated the need for an individual evaluation of teachers. What is one to think, for example, when students who complain about a teacher through the appropriate channels receive a lawyer's letter in reply? This type of situation illustrates that collective evaluation is not an adequate solution. We propose that five-year contracts be introduced, both for teachers and for school principals. At the end of the five-year period, the "school council" could decide whether or not to renew the contract of the teacher or principal concerned. All teachers should be given an opportunity, via their professional corporation or a faculty of education, to upgrade their skills. We would also like to suggest that the teaching certificate issued by the MEQ be valid for not more than five years, renewal being conditional on participation in professional development activities.

In the current situation, an evaluation procedure like the one described above would allow demotivated teachers (a quarter of the teaching corps, according to students) to leave the profession with dignity. Young teachers who currently have little job security (in some school boards, one-year contracts are the rule for one-third of the teaching staff) would have a five-year period of stability to demonstrate their worth.

The centralized collective bargaining agreement, negotiated for teachers throughout Québec, should not be renewed if its continued existence proves to be incompatible, on legal or administrative grounds, with the five-year contract formula. Similarly, the

right to strike should be withdrawn in the education sector. We consider it inappropriate that professionals working in a field of activity of such vital social importance should enjoy the right to strike. There is no comparison possible between workers in the private sector who risk their jobs to go on strike, and professionals in the public sector who risk nothing while holding the general public hostage.

In light of the stringency of our proposals, should they be adopted, the salaries of teachers in Québec could be expected to rise.

Dissident Opinion Concerning the Denominational System

In connection with the question of denominational schools in the Québec school system, five observations must necessarily, in my view, be made: two are sociopolitical in nature, and three are sociocultural. Four out of five were discussed during the hearings or were put forward in the briefs filed with the Commission.

Let us begin with the sociocultural observations. First, the Québec school system is, to all intents and purposes, denominational in theory but secular in practice, with the exception of a small number of groups that have indeed availed themselves of the privileges of the system.

In Québec, the word "Catholic" is used to describe schools in a purely nominal manner. Students can quite easily spend their entire academic career in these schools without ever coming into contact with the fundamental values of Catholicism, and without ever encountering a milieu steeped in these values, pastoral animation being the notable exception. Religion textbooks at the secondary level, for example, exude a type of Christianity that oscillates between, on the one hand, exaggerated narcissism and on the other, a folkloric image, without mentioning the fundamentals of Catholic faith such as the intrinsic value of every human being, the earthly incarnation of God, or the Holy Trinity. More specifically, the religion and personal and social education textbooks used in our Roman Catholic schools during the 1980s never mentioned the role of the family in the Christian tradition!

Québec has no denominational schools in the true meaning of the word, like those found in France and Ontario, where Roman Catholic schools hire only Catholic teachers. One-third of Ontario students and one-quarter of French students attend Roman Catholic schools funded (except for capital expenditures in the case of French schools) by the State. Both Ontario and France are examples of jurisdictions with education systems that are secular in theory but which, in practice, allow for denominational schools. Obviously, there are historical reasons for these realities: they nonetheless throw a penetrating light on our own denominational education system and its thin veneer of confessionality.

The second sociocultural observation is this: despite the measure of flexibility introduced into our system, such as the possibility of individual exemptions and parents' right to have the denominational status of a given school withdrawn, we cannot continue to define ourselves as a pluralistic, liberal society while shirking our responsibility to provide neutral or secular public schools for the segments of our population that want such schools.

We must also, while conforming to this imperative, remain aware of the fact that, unlike other societies with secular school systems, we do not yet have a "civic religion" to compare with that of France or the United States. This is the third sociocultural observation. In this connection, everyone, from the CEQ to the Assemblée des évêques du Québec, is calling for a "shared public culture" which would serve as the basis for instruction in ethics and civics in secular public schools. However, the intellectual community in Québec has, so far, shown itself completely incapable of formulating any such "shared public culture."

The two sociopolitical observations received considerably less attention during the hearings, although several participants discussed the first, which I shall refer to here as the question of "ancestral rights." The Catholic and Protestant communities in Québec enjoy the constitutional prerogative of access to Catholic and Protestant schools. This right was granted by the British Crown in 1774, and entrenched in 1867 by all the parties concerned. Whatever one may think of this right, it exists and must therefore be complied with if the communities concerned, for their own good reasons, wish to avail themselves of it. Our analysis of the briefs dealing with confessionality filed at the hearings differs from that of the Commission (based on summaries of the briefs) as set out in *The State of Education in Québec*. According to our analysis, 57 percent to 63 percent of the briefs, depending on whether ambiguous and indifferent points of views are included, were in favour of denominational schools.

Could it be that the sometimes ambiguous motives of the groups that wish to preserve their constitutional prerogative to Catholic or Protestant schools reflect an unarticulated reflex of popular wisdom? Do these groups suspect that the foundations of our Greco-Judaeo-Christian civilization are being undermined and that the Christian church is the last institution in our society that conveys these values? Incidentally, it is pertinent to point out that the protection of the French language (in a non-independent Québec) is a constitutional prerogative comparable in effect to that of the right to Catholic or Protestant schools. Would we be willing to forgo the right to the French language, in the space of one generation, just because a segment of the Québec population wanted to get rid of an "obstacle to the proper functioning of a modern, liberal society"?

All of which leads to our second sociopolitical observation. It derives from the

constraints imposed by Québec's political situation, which limits us to one of three political options: independence; tacit acceptance of the republican, centralizing political culture of post-1982 neo-liberal Canada; or a retreat to the position of the 1867 Constitution and the measure of sovereignty contained in it (Confederation was a pact between preexisting societies). In this respect, it should be noted that Québec has yet to ratify the 1982 Constitution, the "notwithstanding" clause of which is designed to protect the degree of sovereignty inherent in Canada's various parliaments.

In the absence of a clear decision to embrace, and suffer the consequences of, either independence or integration into the new post-1982 Canada (with a subsequent reduction in its sovereignty), implicit acquiescence in the 1982 Constitution, in order to amend section 93 of the 1867 Constitution, is a mistake. An existing degree of sovereignty would, in the event that independence does not come about, be irretrievably lost. The Constitution Act of 1982 provides the only means of amending the 1867 Constitution, and to use it would mean consecrating the acceptance, by the National Assembly, of the 1982 Constitution.

* * *

There is only one way in which all five observations can be taken into account at the same time. It involves maintaining the status quo, setting up secular school boards-- which is in no way prohibited under the 1867 Constitution--and taking steps to provide truly Catholic and Protestant schools for those parents who opt to enrol their children in them. This is the option submitted to the Estates General by Québec's largest school board.

Since no school can be denominational if a majority of its staff members do not belong to the religious faith involved, Catholic schools must be given the power to hire Catholic teachers. This is precisely what the Royal Commission on Learning has recommended to maintain for Catholic schools in Ontario.

Nevertheless, the Roman Catholic episcopate will have to face up to its responsibilities as the head of Québec's "national" church. Quebecers have, in the past, given up too much in the way of individual liberties for the Church to now abandon them at a time of confusion arising, as some participants in the hearings stated, from a "vacuum of values and meaning" or, in the words of some secondary school students, a "world without hope."

Gary Caldwell
September 23, 1996

Dissident Opinion Concerning the Availability of Public Early

Childhood Services

Kindergarten for 5-year-olds

With respect to early childhood services, I share the Commission's general standpoint, especially as regards the relevance of early intervention, the gradual introduction of a universal preschool service system with priority to disadvantaged communities, the extension and coordination of day care services, improvements in training standards for day care staff, and the need for a global policy.

However, I do not believe that full-time kindergarten for 5-year-olds is appropriate in all cases, although it may provide interesting possibilities for children with special needs.

In my view, an extension of the kindergarten program would satisfy the day care needs of some families, but not the needs of the children themselves.

Part-time kindergarten appears to me to be much more appropriate. It allows children to start school gradually. It is better suited to the natural rhythm of 5-year-olds and their physiological, psychological, social, preschool learning and other needs. It takes account of the different development paths of young children. Between the ages of 0 and 5 years, children undergo a wide variety of experiences in a wide variety of places--in the family home, with a parent or sitter, in the sitter's home, at the day care centre, and so on.

Part-time kindergarten allows all children, whatever their experience, to enter the school environment gradually. It is more respectful of family values, skills and choices.

Kindergarten programs should be revised and coordinated to reduce differences in application, which currently varies significantly depending on the interpretations of the people concerned.

Parental training and support services should be enhanced, to help parents play their role as educators.

As part-time kindergarten is maintained, the availability of day care services should be adjusted to reflect the needs of families. Day care services should be coordinated with school services. In the area of early childhood services, as in many other fields, excessive standardization should be avoided. The extraordinary diversity of children and families, and the resulting diversity of choices and needs, is of great value to society, and should be respected and upheld.

Lucie Demers
September 23, 1996

Dissident Opinion Concerning Confessionality

We agree with the other members of the Commission on the need to replace Québec's confessional educational structures. The consensus on the creation of linguistic school boards, the presentations by church authorities at the hearings, and the many different indications from the groups that addressed the subject all lead us to believe that the Commission's position on the abolition of the confessional system is well-founded.

However, we do not share the majority view on the elimination of Catholic and Protestant religious education from the curriculum for parents and students who so wish. Out of respect for our democratic traditions, we prefer to maintain the possibility for parents and students to choose between religious education and moral education.

Nevertheless, we agree that there is a need to "unlock" the system to enable it to evolve towards linguistic school boards. We believe the best way of doing this, especially in view of the fragile consensus, is to begin a process aimed at achieving this goal and at the same time to adjust the organization of religious education with proper regard for individual rights and the administrative constraints imposed by the budgetary context.

We therefore suggest that the Government should undertake this task at once, by inviting the most influential players to participate in the working mechanism it considers appropriate.

Majella St-Pierre Lucie Demers
September 23, 1996

Dissident Opinion Concerning the Funding of Private Schools

We believe it is essential to compensate parents who send their children to private schools for their financial contribution, both to maintain the private network and for the sake of fairness.

In our own personal experience, most of the children who attend private schools are the sons and daughters of salaried workers who make substantial sacrifices in order to pay tuition fees for their children. We can no doubt rely on them to make an even greater financial contribution to their children's education. However, any such contribution will necessarily be limited and should, in our view, be compensated for

by tax benefits to which these parents are not presently entitled.

In taking this approach, the Government would guarantee the survival of a private school network able to provide parents with a valid alternative to public schools where the public schools do not meet their expectations. As far as the parents themselves are concerned, their financial outlay would entitle them to tax deductions similar to those already available for university tuition fees and day care expenses.

Élise Paré-Tousignant Majella St-Pierre
September 23, 1996

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APPENDIX 2

Priority Actions

1. REESTABLISH THE PRINCIPLE OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

- Set clear objectives for each level of education in terms of graduation rates: expect 85 percent of a given age group to obtain a secondary school general or vocational diploma before the age of 20, 60 percent a college diploma, and 30 percent a bachelor's degree.
- Conduct studies to identify the factors underlying the high failure and dropout rates among boys and take appropriate corrective action while avoiding measures likely to have a negative impact on girls.
- Give priority to revitalizing public schools by imposing a moratorium on the opening of private schools and gradually reducing subsidies to them; putting an end to selection practices in public schools during the compulsory schooling period, except for a limited number of special-interest schools; diversifying the programs and educational activities offered by public schools.
- Keep small village and neighbourhood schools open as far as possible; establish clear guidelines to help local communities make decisions in this respect, and a general framework for maintaining educational services geared to the needs of the regions, in line with an interministerial territorial occupation policy.
- Provide special pedagogical and financial support for the most socioeconomically disadvantaged areas with a high concentration of students from cultural communities.
- Draft a policy statement to clarify the responsibilities of the education system with respect to intercultural education and the integration of immigrant students.
- With the native communities, determine the best ways of meeting the special support, reception and referral needs of native students.
- Maintain the principle of integrating students with handicaps or learning or adjustment difficulties into regular classes and the range of approaches currently used for this purpose; pay special attention to research and teaching

resource needs resulting from the integration of children with behavioural problems and to the needs of adults with learning difficulties who are enrolled in adult and higher education.

- Find alternatives to grade repeating at the elementary and secondary levels.
- Maintain free education and free student services up to and including the college level; maintain university tuition fees at their current level except if it can be proved that raising them is an unavoidable last resort.
- Maintain the underlying principles of the student financial assistance system while extending eligibility to part-time adult students and secondary school vocational education students, and ensure that future changes to the system do not contribute to raising students' debt load.

2. EXTEND AND IMPROVE EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES

- Increase the number of places available in regulated day care services.
- Offer full-time kindergarten for 5-year-olds to all children without, however, making it compulsory.
- Offer free public services (the parents' choice of either kindergarten or not-for-profit day care) on a half-day basis for all children and on a full-day basis for certain categories of preschoolers with special needs (children from underprivileged backgrounds and cultural communities, and children with handicaps).
- Establish common guidelines for day care and kindergarten with respect to educational activities for 4-year-olds, taking into account the preschool education program used in kindergarten for 5-year-olds.
- Improve the training of day care and school day care workers by making a college diploma in early childhood education a hiring condition and by offering already employed staff the training they need to upgrade their qualifications to the more stringent standards.
- Make parents and day care workers aware of and able to detect the development problems of young children so that better diagnoses can be made.
- Draft a comprehensive policy on early childhood services.

3. RESTRUCTURE ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY CURRICULA TO INCREASE THEIR CULTURAL CONTENT

- Establish learning profiles to define the fundamental learning students should acquire in elementary and secondary school.
- Ensure that the exit profiles for a given level of education coincide with the entry profile for the following level.
- Ensure that students attain the established profiles before going on to the next level of education by creating "buffer zones" where they can bring their knowledge and skills up to standard.
- Take into account the following principles in revising the elementary and secondary school curricula: respect the mission of each level of education by providing the necessary continuity between them; encompass the three educational goals and four types of knowledge ("learning to learn, to be, to do and to live together"); keep in mind that common-core general education should extend to the end of Secondary III and provide for diversification from Secondary IV on; ensure balance between the various subjects; provide for a balanced distribution of subject matter throughout the school years; consider the possibilities of interdisciplinarity and subject integration; clarify the role of other activities besides courses and of other educational venues; involve school staff, particularly teachers, in the restructuring of curricula and the revision of programs that should logically follow; set a clear timetable while allowing an adequate amount of time for necessary debate and discussion.
- Set up a multi-sector task force for the restructuring of elementary and secondary school curricula, spearheaded by the MEQ which, after consulting the schools, will determine the importance to be given to the subjects in the basic school regulations, with a view to implementing the reform before the year 2000.
- Establish a permanent revision mechanism to update the curricula on an ongoing basis.

4. CONSOLIDATE VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

- Reinststate a vocational education branch for youth-sector students; design this branch so that it is accessible to students after Secondary III and leads to a

secondary school diploma and so that they can take general education courses concurrently with vocational education courses.

- Diversify experiments aimed at adapting general education courses to the interests of students in vocational education or technical programs.
- Gradually implement the apprenticeship system adopted by the Société québécoise de développement de la main-d'oeuvre (SQDM).
- Enrich the vocational and technical education dispensed in educational institutions by introducing work-study programs and providing students with access to varied learning experiences during on-site work periods.
- Encourage the creation of a continuum between secondary-level vocational education programs, college-level technical programs and university programs. For this purpose, continue experimental projects involving integrated secondary- and college-level programs and extend experimental harmonization of college and university programs such as that carried out by the École de technologie supérieure with its open-ended technical programs.
- Maintain individualized paths for learning for students who are unable to meet the requirements for admission into vocational education programs.
- In the same vein as stage 2 of the experimental project to diversify vocational education paths, ensure that student and teacher selection is in line with the objective of this path designed to prepare students for semi-skilled trades and broaden the evaluation of the experimental project particularly as regards the quality of results.
- Invest in more refined work force planning methods without making programs available solely on the basis of labour demand.
- Review the principles underlying the establishment of service points (the "map of options"), taking into account the training needs of sparsely populated regions.
- Continue efforts to adapt facilities, instructional materials and teaching methods in order to make vocational training accessible to students with handicaps.
- Adopt measures to increase the number of female students enrolling in technology-related training programs.

- Reestablish a permanent, properly trained teaching corps in the vocational education sector.

5. CARRY OUT THE NECESSARY REORGANIZATION TO MEET THE DEMAND FOR MASS HIGHER EDUCATION

College

- Maintain the college system and its current characteristics: joint delivery of technical and pre-university education, core general education, and the network set-up.
- Continue implementing the renewal measures for college education, while improving the following aspects: geographical accessibility, the reduction of remedial activities, support for students in making academic and career decisions, the open-endedness of technical programs, consideration of adults' needs, and teachers' background in educational psychology.

University

- Maintain the three components of the university mission--teaching, research and services to the community--as well as academics' role as the critics of society.
- Improve teaching, especially at the undergraduate level.
- Improve professors' training in educational psychology.
- Support pedagogical research.
- Pay special attention to conditions relating to student support and success.
- Review the organization of work within universities to better integrate lecturers while encouraging tenured professors to participate more fully in undergraduate teaching.
- Review the way in which programs are developed to improve their cohesiveness and ensure that they are more closely geared to the competencies students will need in the workplace.

- Rationalize the supply of university programs.
- Explore avenues leading to greater flexibility in the supply of postsecondary programs.
- Encourage universities to focus on their specialty areas and avoid specialization based on one component of the university mission or one level of studies (undergraduate/graduate).
- Establish a clear policy on university research.
- Renew initiatives aimed at providing services to the community by conducting research that is relevant to ordinary citizens.
- Examine ways (including an exclusive service clause) to better supervise professors' fulfilment of their tasks and duties.
- Through the CREPUQ, create an outside mechanism to evaluate universities' performance.
- Provide the State with the leverage mechanisms that will allow it to participate in planning, policy-making and coordination of activities at the university level.
- Set up a joint committee on the mission, organization and development of the university network, spearheaded by the MEQ.

6. ESTABLISH A REAL CONTINUING EDUCATION SYSTEM

- Take the principle of lifelong education into account in the basic curricula and ensure that, by the end of their compulsory schooling, students master basic concepts that will serve as the basis for future learning.
- Given their role in providing education and training, improve cooperation between schools and families, community groups, cultural institutions, the media and the workplace.
- Better recognize the role of volunteer popular education agencies and clarify their relationship with the education system.
- Develop distance education at all levels of the education system and encourage use of new information and communications technologies, notably, by

supporting the development of multimedia networks.

- Step up efforts to eliminate illiteracy.
- Improve access to basic education and part-time vocational and technical education. At the university level, develop services to meet professional development needs.
- Maintain and consolidate reception and referral services by setting up, in each region, a one-stop service point to provide information on the programs offered at the various levels of education.
- Consolidate services for the recognition of prior learning at the secondary and college levels, and step up efforts to create such services at the university level.
- In adult and continuing education, pay closer attention to educational support services and teachers' working conditions.
- Draft a lifelong education policy.

7. SUPPORT THE MAIN PLAYERS TO PROMOTE EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS

- At all levels of education, reassert the importance of education and recognize its demands on students.
- Clarify the responsibilities of educational institutions with respect to student support and supervision (including the quality of the student-teacher relationship, the cohesiveness of programs, more profitable use of time available outside the classroom, the maintenance of a variety of models such as tutoring and pairing or twinning); ensure that these responsibilities are carried out at all levels of education, and that any necessary cooperation with resources from outside the education community exists.
- Support extracurricular activities as a means of instilling a sense of community and of providing opportunities for other types of learning.
- Pay attention to student guidance and counselling in keeping with schools' guiding or counselling role.
- Give parents complete and regular information on their children's academic

progress.

- Encourage more deliberate action by committees composed of parents for parents aimed at generating interest in school life and developing parenting skills.
- Clarify the professional and human qualities to be expected of teachers.
- Set stringent requirements for the recruitment of new teachers and ensure that, during their initial training, they acquire the necessary skills in the subjects they will teach and a solid grounding in educational psychology.
- See to it that school bodies take a more serious approach to continuing education for their staff, by encouraging them to specify their needs, by providing access to a variety of training venues and methods, by allowing appropriate time, and by ensuring that training activities lead to some form of professional recognition.
- Review teacher training and certification to allow the gradual, sustained integration of new teachers (notably by extending the cooperating school and mentoring approaches), diversification of their tasks and duties over the course of their careers, and the sharing of expertise in light of the imminent turnover in the teaching force.
- Ensure better cooperation between schools and universities with respect to both teacher training and education research; such cooperation could be facilitated by the creation of a provincial research and animation centre on the teaching profession.
- Ensure that professional and support staff are involved in achieving the educational mission and in making decisions regarding the organization of work and of school life.
- Emphasize the leadership role of school principals and ensure that initial training, recruitment procedures and professional development reflect this orientation.
- Support associations, particularly teacher, labour, student and parent associations, that wish to play an active role in implementing the educational reform.
- Support educational innovation (especially innovative projects and alternative

schools) at all levels of education.

- Ensure better appropriation and integrated use of new information and communications technologies.
- Undertake joint action to improve the state of school libraries.
- Provide anglophones with greater access to instructional materials in their own language.
- Create a flexible mechanism for the evaluation of educational institutions.

8. REDISTRIBUTE POWERS TO INCREASE LOCAL DECISION-MAKING CAPACITY AND OPENNESS TO THE COMMUNITY

- Maintain the State in its position of responsibility for the general orientations and broad guidelines of elementary and secondary school education.
- As regards management of the education system, establish multi-year plans for the implementation of ministerial guidelines and evaluate results with a view to making educational institutions more accountable.
- With respect to elementary and secondary school education, maintain an intermediate level between the MEQ and the schools, and reduce the number of school boards by having school board territories correspond to those of the regional county municipalities.
- Enhance the democratic nature of these intermediate authorities by creating mechanisms for consulting the public, staff and students on the main elements of their plan for implementing ministerial policies and by amending the Education Act to clarify their obligations in this respect.
- Open schools to their communities more broadly by providing for greater community representation on the institutional council and consideration of each player's expertise in decision-making.
- Pay particular attention to the negotiation of aspects relating to the organization of work.
- Pursue necessary efforts to allow the implementation of new labour relations

policies aimed at greater collective responsibility for the education system.

- Ensure that each school examine its work organization from the viewpoint of management and of control of the educational process.
- Give teachers greater control over aspects that have an impact on educational activities, such as teaching duties, use of their time in school, use of students' time in school, and evaluation of learning.
- Create, in each administrative region, a body in charge of coordinating the supply of educational services at all levels of education.

9. CONTINUE MOVING TOWARDS A NON-CONFESSIONAL SYSTEM

- Transform confessional school boards into linguistic school boards.
- Undertake action to have section 93 of the Canadian Constitution repealed with a view to abolishing existing confessional structures and mechanisms.
- Encourage groups currently holding confessional guarantees to introduce mechanisms that will enable all Christian education to be dispensed in places more appropriate than the schools.
- Reinforce values and civic education as well as knowledge of the religious phenomenon from a cultural viewpoint, and provide civic support services.

10. GUARANTEE FUNDING TO ACHIEVE OUR EDUCATIONAL GOALS

- Maintain the current level of funding for education (8.5 percent of GDP).
- Earmark public funding first and foremost for basic education (early childhood services, elementary and secondary school, including adult education, regardless of whether it is dispensed by educational institutions or by popular education agencies).
- Reinforce equalization measures to take into account socioeconomic conditions in sensitive neighbourhoods and regions.
- Increase the percentage of private funding for higher education without, for the

time being, introducing tuition fees at the college level or increasing tuition fees at the university level.

- Reduce public funding to the private education sector.
 - Gradually increase the minimum 1-percent-of-payroll contribution businesses are expected to make to meet manpower training needs.
 - Encourage private investment in training and education through the generalization of education savings plans and the introduction of tax incentives for individuals and businesses.
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MANDATE

In accordance with Order in Council No. 511-95 of the Gouvernement du Québec, the Estates General on Education are intended:

- to express the needs and expectations of the general public with respect to education, and at the same time to mount a major initiative to hear the needs and expectations expressed and the contributions required to satisfy them;
- to provide a forum for collective reflection and discussion of the different interpretations of the current and future situation;
- to define objectives for the school in its broadest sense, both now and in the future;
- to establish the broadest possible social consensus with a view to action.

Accordingly, the mandate entrusted to the Commission is as follows:

- by directing discussions and consultation throughout the territory, to produce the basic document of the Estates General on Education by December 15, 1995;
- to ensure that the document is drafted in simple, clear language and faithfully reflects the needs of the general public with respect to education;
- to synchronize the various stages of the process in the capacity of resource group and authority;
- to chair the regional and provincial sittings of the Estates General on Education.

In accordance with Order in Council No. 291-96 of the Gouvernement du Québec, the mandate of the Commission for the Estates General on Education was modified to add the following:

- following the regional sitting and in preparation for the provincial sitting, the Commission will produce, by June 30, 1996, a document in which it will take stock of the divergent and convergent trends which emerged at this sitting;
- in the two weeks following the provincial sitting, the Commission will produce and submit its final report, in which it will set out the trends and priorities as

well as any deadlocks and consensuses which emerged at this sitting.

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THE COMMISSION MEMBERS

The Commission for the Estates General on Education has 15 members and is chaired jointly by Robert Bisailon and Lucie Demers.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Robert Bisailon

- Background in elementary and secondary education and teacher unionism.
- Former president of the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation.

Lucie Demers

- Mother of three young children and special education teacher.
- Spokesperson for the committee which lobbied to prevent the closure of École Sainte-Marie in Batiscan.

Nicolas Bélanger

- Currently completing a doctoral degree in physics at Université Laval.
- Currently contributing to a review of the physics program at the undergraduate level.

André Caillé

- Doctoral degree in physical chemistry.
- President and CEO of Gaz Métropolitain.

Gary Caldwell

- Sociologist, independent researcher, and farmer.
- Author of several works, notably on Québec's English-speaking community

and social change in Québec.

Huguette Gilbert¹

- Master's degree in education technology.
- Founding member and vice-president of Informatique MultiHexa inc., which is based in Québec City.

Paul Inchauspé

- Diploma in philosophy.
- Director general of the Cégep Ahuntsic.

Élisabeth Le

- Born of a Vietnamese father and a French mother, she has lived in Québec for the last 12 years.
- Linguistics student (doctoral level) at the Université de Montréal and lecturer in French as a second language at McGill University.

Bernard Lemaire

- Co-founder (with his father and brother) of Cascades inc.
- Internationally renowned businessman and board member of many companies.

Normand Maurice²

- Master's degree in religious science.
- Pioneer of recycling activities as a means of social integration.

Maria-Luisa Monreal

- Originally from Chile, she has lived in Québec for the past twenty years. She holds a bachelor's degree in sociology and is currently enrolled in the master's program in social work at the Université du Québec à Montréal.

- She is known for her work with cultural communities and organizations dedicated to the integration of immigrants.

Élise Paré-Tousignant

- Teacher at the École de musique of Université Laval.
- Artistic director of the Domaine Forget music camp in Charlevoix.
- University representative on the board of directors of the Conservatoire de musique du Québec and president of the Commission des affaires étudiantes de l'Université Laval.

Céline Saint-Pierre

- Doctoral degree in sociology, vice-rector of education and research at the Université du Québec à Montréal.
- Renowned expert in the fields of labour, organization, new technology, and social change.

Stéphanie Vennes

- Sociology student at the Université de Montréal.
- Former president of the Fédération étudiante collégiale du Québec.

Majella St-Pierre³

- Licence in literature.
- President of the Conseil de la coopération du Québec, an umbrella organization for Québec cooperatives.

¹ Huguette Gilbert resigned on March 7, 1996.

² Normand Maurice resigned on June 30, 1996.

3 Majella St-Pierre acted as the Commission's secretary until June 30, 1996.

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