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S U R L A F O R M A T I O N
D E S A D U L T E S

QUEBEC ASSOCIATION OF PROTESTANT SCHOOL BOARDS
DECEMBER 1980

INTRODUCTION

The Quebec' Association of Protestant School Boards is a corporation created under Part III of the Quebec Companies Act having been issued Letters Patent on the 14th of April 1936 under the name of the "Provincial Association of Protestant School Boards". Subsequently, on the 14th day of December 1953, supplementary Letters Patent were issued changing the name of the Association to its present form.

At the present time its membership comprises twenty-one (21) sector or local boards dispensing elementary education and eleven (11) regional or integrated boards dispensing elementary and secondary education. The total school board enrollment at the elementary and secondary level consists of 96,072 school children.

One of the objectives of the Association, as contained in its Constitution and By-Laws, is: "To cooperate with the Department of Education of the Province of Québec in the operation of the Education Act and in the furtherance of education in general". Based on the latter phrase in the above quoted objective, all eleven of the regional or integrated boards of the Association have actively cooperated with the Ministry of Education in providing Adult Education programmes in the communities which they serve. There are at present some 42,900 persons enrolled in courses given by these member boards throughout the Province.

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1. RESPONSIBILITY OF SCHOOL BOARDS

Section 19 of Bill 71 which was assented to on December 21, 1979 amended Section 189 of the Education Act by adding thereto the following paragraph as one of the powers and duties of school commissioners:

(19) To ensure that the schools provide the children under their jurisdiction and the adults domiciled in their territory with educational and cultural services in accordance with the law and the regulations and that those services are accessible to those children and adults.

This Association is gratified that in this amendment the Government of Québec acknowledged the school board as a local educational authority responsible for adult education. Based on this assurance, our member boards have or are in the process of drawing up policies covering the Adult Education services to be provided by the school boards. It is apparent that the school boards have assumed the responsibilities given to them and, in light of the numbers presently enrolled under their jurisdiction at the present time, are capable of assuming this responsibility. In many areas outside of the metropolitan areas of Québec and Montréal, it is the school board alone which is providing the services at the present time. In fact, because of the nature of its educational system, in some cases the Protestant school board is the only institution capable of providing instruction in English to the population in the area served by the school board.

Having said this, however, this Association believes that for too long there has been the lack of a fundamental government policy as regards to Adult Education and this has caused extreme difficulty in the preparation of long term planning by the school boards.

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Without this policy on behalf of the government, it is practically impossible to bring stability into the field of adult education.

There is no doubt in our mind that the school board, equipped as it is to provide elementary and secondary education at the local level, is the institution best equipped to provide adult educational services to the community. Lack of planning by the government has, however, resulted in unnecessary and confusing duplication of educational services offered to adults. In regions where universities, CEGEPs and other educational institutions in addition to school boards, provide adult education, their respective roles should be clearly defined according to their own areas of competence, responsibilities and corresponding powers.

It is our hope that the Commission will provide the information necessary to the government that will allow the latter to establish a policy which clearly defines the role of the local school board in the area of adult education and that such a policy, before it is formally adopted, be submitted to the school boards for consultation and review. Great strides have been made in adult education in the past, however, much more work is required and the school boards in our Association are willing and able to assume their role in this field.

RECOMMENDATION (1)

THAT the Government of Québec prepare a policy on Adult Education services to be provided in the Province of Québec and that this policy be submitted to the school boards for consultation and review before its adoption.

RECOMMENDATION (2)

THAT the policy which is the subject of the foregoing recommendation, continue to recognize the school boards as the local educational authority for adult education and that they be given the powers necessary to carry out their responsibilities effectively.

2. ROLE OF THE GOVERNMENT IN ADULT EDUCATION

This Association believes that there is a need for the government to clearly establish the specific role of adult education in an integrated system of continuing education, taking into consideration the fact that this role is conditioned partly by the fact that adults have particular needs and partly by the fact that factors such as family and social responsibilities, work experiences, etc.. must be taken into account. There is a natural link between a policy on adult education and a policy on the development of human resources because individuals naturally influence the development of society just as society influences development of individuals to such an extent that it may be stated that the development of human resources is, in itself, a fundamental objective of adult education.

Strong links must also exist between a policy on adult education and a policy on manpower because adult education must respond both to needs in, and of, manpower. This does not mean, however, that the policy on adult education should be subordinate.

In the same way, a policy in economic development cannot be solely concerned with the growth of industry while ignoring the development of workers, it must be related to a policy on adult education and particularly in the area of vocational training.

Since it is true that adult education is related to all the main aspects of human life, it is inconceivable that it would not be linked to other government policies. It can therefore be stated that a global policy on adult education must form part of a perspective of continuing education.

As it is an accepted fact that the different government departments must be involved in the field of adult education, it is evident that

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it would be advisable to define clearly the ways in which each should be involved, to prevent divisiveness and conflicts.

Having said this, however, this Association is of the opinion that it must be the Ministry of Education, as the institution responsible for education, which should and must assume total responsibility for all interventions in the field of adult education.

RECOMMENDATION (3)

THAT a policy on Adult Education be adopted by the government taking into consideration the needs and priorities of all branches of government and that the ultimate responsibility for coordination and operation of such a policy be vested with the Ministry of Education.

3. THE ROLE OF THE INDIVIDUAL

While it is true that the government has the responsibility for the preparation and adoption of an overall policy on Adult Education, it is not the state or any other body which should dictate what should be taught in courses given thereunder. This decision should be made at the local level in response to the needs and wishes of the individual. It is the individual himself that is the principal agent of his or her own education. The government should provide citizens with the means to increase their self understanding and to ensure their growth and full development given the technological, economic, social and political requirements which play a part in the evolution of society. To this end, a citizen should be allowed to choose the type of education which will encourage him or her to take responsibility for his or her own development given the particular characteristics of each milieu.

The government must recognize the adults' right to continuing education as an essential factor in his development. More than ever, it is important to realize that it is essential that every citizen be able to continue to learn throughout his life and even to learn how to learn if he wishes to reach his full potential and participate in the development of society.

Individuals must be allowed to participate in the economic development of their region, not only by helping them to acquire the vocational competence required by technological changes, but also by providing them with opportunities to contribute effectively to the formulation and realization of a development plan.

The implementation of a policy on adult education must be based on a continually updated knowledge of the needs of individuals and groups by involvement of these individuals and groups. The government should

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therefore encourage, through appropriate mechanisms, the individuals concerned to express their own educational needs. It would seem logical to us that it should be the responsibility of the adult education authorities closest to the people involved (i.e. the school boards) to interpret these needs and to define the appropriate means to meet them.

RECOMMENDATION (4)

THAT in any policy on Adult Education developed by the government it be clearly enunciated that it is the individual himself who should be the principal agent of his education and not the state.

RECOMMENDATION (5)

THAT in any such policy the government encourage the individuals concerned to express their own educational needs through whatever appropriate means are available.

4. FINANCING OF ADULT EDUCATION

Under the present budgetary rules relating to Adult Education, school boards are allowed to charge only direct additional expenses incurred in providing for their adult education services. That is to say those expenses which the school board would not have to pay if it did not provide the service. This would seem logical if it were possible to actually split out the costs of services and depreciation incurred for the use of school board facilities and equipment by the adult education department. There is, it is true, a fee of one dollar (\$1.00) per group hour of training which the school board can charge, however, experience has shown this to be inadequate. School boards faced with ever decreasing budgets and restraints on spending find this imputation fee to be insufficient to cover the costs involved in operating adult education services.

School boards are charged primarily with the responsibility of providing primary and secondary education to the population of their territory, thus it is that their budgets must primarily be drawn up to meet this requirement. As an adjunct to this, boards have responded to the needs of the adult community in providing adult educational services. The major problem is that the imputation charges which a board can charge - the one dollar referred to above - does not, in any way, cover the costs of depreciation of school equipment used nor the support services which a board is, of necessity, obliged to provide. If the school board is by law obliged to provide the services, then there must be more monies made available to the school board. The Commissioners and senior board staff must have a greater say in the allocation of funds from within the budget reserved for adult education so that its primary sources of revenue, which are to be used for elementary and secondary education, are not prejudicially affected.

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If the boards were able to allocate the true cost of the services and the use of facilities, then a large measure of the problem could be alleviated. As the locally elected representatives of the taxpayers in a given region, the responsibility for deciding where funds should go should rest with the school board. Under the present system, this decision-making power is for the most part vested with the Director of Adult Educational Services, the staff of his department and the Ministry of Education and not with the Director General of the school board or the Council of Commissioners.

RECOMMENDATION (6)

THAT the Commission recommend to the Government of Québec that an appropriate body be established to review the method of financing adult educational services.

RECOMMENDATION (7)

THAT such body be composed of, amongst others, representatives of the Quebec Association of Protestant School Boards.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION (1)

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