



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Setting the Stage

The CTF believes that the mission of public schools is to educate an increasingly diverse student population with children from a wide range of socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds, a population reflective of Canadian society. Every child is welcome in our public schools regardless of the challenges they may face. Reducing child poverty and improving Aboriginal education continue to be leading examples of CTF priorities.

The public expects a great deal from public schools, and teachers understand and respect these expectations. But meeting all of the diverse needs comes with associated financial costs.

There are a number of challenges to fulfilling the promise of public education. One of the key pressures over the past two decades has been an over emphasis on test-driven accountability, which has limited a teacher's capacity to address diverse needs. However, education underfunding has been an even greater barrier to fulfilling the promise, despite the fact that recent polling show that the public continues to support increased expenditures on public education.

Exposure to a wide range of opinions, beliefs and experiences is what makes our public school system strong. This is why the Canadian Teachers' Federation has brought together education leaders from across the country for "The Funding of Public Education: Great Promise". This forum will facilitate the examination of this issue from a diversity of viewpoints.

Mary-Lou Donnelly



PETER COWLEY
Fraser Institute

Peter Cowley identified the challenge behind the status quo in education as being universal access to government operated education programs. He challenges that education should be no different in this regard than the provision of a child's other basic necessities such as food and shelter. The problem with the status quo is that there is no incentive for the engagement of parents because they do not have a direct financial interest. The private sector is likewise not engaged because they do not have an incentive to become involved in education. Cowley proposed a solution involving parental choice of school and education provider, and a responsibility for parents to pay for a portion of the cost of their child's education.



BRUCE CAMPBELL
Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives

Bruce Campbell's keynote presentation traced the evolution of Canadian economics from the Keynesian era (1950-1980) to the Milton Friedman "neo-con years" (1980-present). He characterized the Keynesian period as being "a golden age", with historic economic and social gains for average families. He characterized this current era of neo-con economics as being one in which business and the rich drive prosperity, inequality is not viewed as a problem, finance and trade are deregulated, taxes are reduced, and public program spending is cut. Finally, he compared Sweden and Canada in terms of inequality and poverty, labour rights, and social programs, with some thoughts about whether the neo-conservative economic path was inevitable and do we have a choice going forward.

DISCUSSION FORUMS

Education Funding Trends & Identification of Priorities

The groups found few similarities in the two presentations that originated from diverse philosophical and ideological perspectives. Both speakers believe that to be successful, we must move from the status quo in education funding. They differ, however, in that one believes that the funding must be shared by the parents while the other believes that the state should fully fund public services including education. When considering the speakers' diverse positions on education investment, the groups felt that better quality education takes place when parents are more invested in their child's education, not necessarily when they invest more. In terms of funding priorities for education, many common themes emerged among the groups. These included universality of funding for the common good, adequate and sustainable funding, funding provided to meet educational outcomes including

a diverse curriculum that supports educating the whole child in a diverse student population. Funding for education should address the needs of minority groups (i.e. aboriginal, minority language) in Canada to ensure equal opportunity. Groups generally disagreed with the idea of parental co-payment as potentially leading to increased stratification and inequity within the education system. Groups were also concerned about the de-professionalization of teachers given the proposed expansion to other external education "providers". Groups agree that investment in public schools should be based on the desired educational outcomes integrated within the broader societal context and related public policy. This investment should ensure equitable access to educational opportunity to meet the needs of all students and include quality professional development for teachers.





SUSAN PERRY
Ontario English Catholic
Teachers' Association

Susan Perry's research presentation on Teacher Merit Pay provided a literature review of the various models of merit pay including uniform salary schedules, performance-based salary schedules and outcomes-based salary systems, as well as pros and cons of performance/merit pay. She also examined merit pay in selected international jurisdictions. The paper provides an historical overview of various merit pay plans, and points out that there is very little research regarding the effectiveness of the latest generation of merit pay schemes. Ms Perry urged participants to think about the potential effects of performance-based rewards on teachers, students, classrooms, schools, systems and society. She concluded that the existing compensation system has served us well as it encourages professional development and allows for other non-monetary, non-pecuniary incentives like unpaid leave that are more attractive to teachers than money.

BOB KIM
National Education Association

Bob Kim's presentation focused on the "Race to the Top" (RTTT) program and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in the United States. Mr. Kim provided an overview of recent developments in K-12 education funding in the USA, and discussed the differences between the ESEA and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, including RTTT. He went on to discuss ESEA in 2010 and the Obama Blueprint for Reform, the NEA response and ESEA reauthorization priorities, as well as the Obama administration's Education Budget Proposal for 2011. Mr. Kim stated that while NEA supports at least 70% of what president Obama has initiated, the remaining 30% including RTTT has overshadowed the positive impact of these reforms.

BOB HARRIS
Education International

Bob Harris' keynote presentation addressed issues pertaining to the forces for change in education finance. He discussed the history of the current economic crisis and then followed with economic projections drawing on information from such entities as the IMF, the OECD and the World Bank. He then focused on the threat to public education resulting from declining public revenues, and "exit strategies" to reduce deficits. Finally, he spoke to the extra pain that developing countries are suffering at the hands of the recession, as they struggle to emerge from the crisis with reduced international funding support.

TABLE ROUNDS

Potential Impact of International Initiatives for Education in Canada

Potential impacts of international trends (in order of priority):

1. Deficit reduction at the expense of social programs including education
2. Tying funding policy to achievement based on the outcomes of standardized test
3. Teacher compensation and evaluation based on the outcome of standardized tests (merit pay)
4. Increased education privatization (charter schools and vouchers)
5. Increased likelihood of elitist and "ghetto" schools
6. Entrenchment of the ideology of education increasingly seen through a narrow economic lens with children as commodities
7. Erosion of collective agreements

Impacts of international trends that are already evident in Canada (in order of priority):

1. Funding cuts in response to a call for deficit reduction
2. Standardized testing and the ranking of schools (PCAP, PISA)
3. Employers tabling proposals involving compensation tied to student performance (merit pay)
4. Education seen as a commodity (human capital approach)
5. Narrow policy focused on measured educational outcomes
6. Devaluing of the teaching profession
7. Government policy allowing the use of public funds to support private schools
8. Rural depopulation through school closure (urban application of choice)
9. Intensification of teaching practice due to increased demands on teachers

