

# Community Dispatch

An InfoFax of the Halton Social Planning Council & Volunteer Halton

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## A REPORT ON THE DOUBLE COHORT: THEIR FUTURES AT STAKE

*The Halton Social Planning Council is concerned about access and opportunity in education. The Council's demographic and social statistics on Halton's population demonstrate year after year the positive relationship of education to literacy, income, employment and quality of life. Government and business speak about the market's need for a highly trained labour force if Canada and Ontario are to be part of global economic development. However, the youth of our community face enormous challenges if not barriers in pursuing post-secondary education. There is no doubt that this is causing anxiety and stress in families and frustration and hopelessness in the youth of our community. Many of the voluntary sector agencies throughout Halton support families who will be confronted with the double cohort and access to post-secondary education. The Council shares with you the Executive Summary of **A Report on the Double Cohort: Their Futures at Stake** prepared by People for Education. This is a group of parents working to preserve fully publicly funded education in Ontario.*

### Introduction

The secondary school reform announced by the Conservative government in 1997 replaced Ontario's five-year high school program with a four-year program. In 2003, the last class of the old five-year curriculum will graduate at the same time as the first class of the new four-year curriculum. At this time, the double class of graduates will be seeking placement for post-secondary education; the

resulting swell in the student population will be spread over three years, but the most dramatic increase will be in 2003-04, which will create an unprecedented strain on Ontario's colleges and universities.

This *Community Dispatch* examines the preparedness of the Ontario government and post-secondary institutions for the double cohort students and assesses the adequacy of these accommodations.

### Report Findings:

Some of the significant findings of this study are as follows:

#### *Student Spaces*

- Based on Ontario University Application Centre enrolment projections, at least 21,000 "willing and qualified" students may not find a place at an Ontario university in 2003-04

#### *Class sizes*

- One third of our college and university respondents say their student/faculty ratios will become even higher in 2003. Student/faculty ratios in Ontario universities are already the highest in Canada – 10% higher than in other provinces.
- The problem of high student/faculty ratios is compounded by the current crisis in faculty hiring as a large portion of the faculty currently teaching at universities

and colleges in Canada and the United States are reaching retirement age. To meet the need for faculty will require massive hiring in an extremely tight market.

#### *Admission Standards and Fair Evaluation*

- In 2001-02, the average secondary school grade for first-year acceptance in Ontario universities was 80.3%. With the number of qualified applicants increasing dramatically in the double cohort year, admission averages must rise significantly. One third of university respondents said they expected an increase in their minimum admission levels.
- There is no policy in place that would enable the admissions offices of colleges and universities to fairly compare and assess the students from the new and old curriculum.

#### *Tuition Fees*

- Between 1996 and 2001, tuition fees increased by more than 60% for regulated programs. For graduate, professional, and some college programs, fees have been deregulated and have increased as much as 521%.

#### *Operating Grants*

- Operating grants provide the funding for salaries for faculty, support staff, associated services, cleaning, heat, light and, generally, the costs of running the institution.
- In 1995, the Government of Ontario cut \$400 million from post-secondary funding. Since then, annual operating grants have not kept pace with increased enrolment figures and Ontario inflation rates.

- The government's funding allocation of \$293 million to address the double cohort is inadequate. The Council of Ontario Universities has said universities require an additional \$413 million by 2005, and the Association of Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology of Ontario (ACAATO) reports that colleges will require \$291 million by 2004 to deal with the double cohort.
- Fewer than 10% of responding post-secondary institutions felt that current and projected operating grants were adequate to accommodate the double cohort. Current operating grants are 25% less than 1991 operating grants, when adjusted for inflation.

#### *Residence Beds*

- Universities project an increase of 28% in first-year enrolment for 2003-04. The number of residence beds at these institutions is expected to increase only 12% – or by less than half – over the same period.

#### *Capital Spending*

- One third of college respondents said capital spending did not reflect admission demands.

Students graduating from secondary school in 2003 are just as qualified and willing as students graduating in any other year. These students deserve the same access to post-secondary education as Ontario students of equivalent ability in other years. They deserve a high level of quality in their post-secondary education. They deserve a student/faculty ratio that is not the worst in Canada. They deserve to be offered the same range of choice in programs to which they would have had access in another year. Inadequate education

access and choice will unfairly limit their academic careers and their futures.

## Recommendations

### People for Education recommends:

1. That the government commit to additional funding for 2003-04 through 2006-07, the years most affected by the double cohort, at levels that truly reflect the anticipated increase in student numbers caused by the double cohort. Thus, willing and qualified students unable to gain entrance in 2003-04 will have the opportunity in the following years.
2. That the government's allocation of these funds be based on a flexible formula that ensures operating grants are paid on the basis of actual, not projected enrolments.
3. That the additional operating grants designated for the double cohort be released by the government in a timely fashion so that institutions can begin the hiring process that will result in faculty being in place in 2003-04.
4. That the government ensure the level of these operating grants be sufficient to decrease the student/faculty ratio to at least the national average.
5. That the universities and colleges ensure that the percentage of residence spaces currently allocated to first-year students remain constant throughout the double cohort years.
6. That the government, in co-operation with students and educators, ensure that a province-wide policy ensuring fair and equitable evaluation of the grades of both graduating classes is established by June of 2002.

*For a copy of the full report contact People for Education, P.O. Box 64, Station P, Toronto, Ontario M5S 2S6 or e-mail: [p4e@peopleforeducation.com](mailto:p4e@peopleforeducation.com)*

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