Royal Commission on Education

A Legacy for Learners: Summary of Findings 1988

Commissioner: Barry M. Sullivan, Q.C.
Province of British Columbia

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*Barry M. Sullivan, Q.C., Commissioner*

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<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</tbody>
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This summary attempts to capture, in abbreviated form, the main elements within *The Report of the Royal Commission on Education: A Legacy for Learners*, as well as the seven volumes of commissioned papers which comprise the technical reports to the Commission. No summary statement can reflect the full texture of the thought and debate pertaining to the important educational questions addressed by a study of this size and depth, and for this reason I invite readers to examine the report itself and its supporting materials for more complete treatment of issues that interest them.

In my formal report, I express my gratitude to many individuals for their painstaking work on this enterprise. Here I would like to thank the people of British Columbia for their great help, encouragement, and wisdom. In small and large communities, in isolated and in urban areas, I was assisted by people from all walks of life who found time in busy routines to meet with the Commission and to make their own special contributions to the quality of schooling in British Columbia.

Because provincial schooling is something that touches all of our lives in fundamental ways, I urge all British Columbians to consider, if they will, the findings of the report and its implications for educational policymaking in this province. Our young people are, indeed, our most important provincial resource, and our schools are our most valuable institutions. The least they deserve is our attention.

Barry M. Sullivan, Q.C.
Commissioner.

The summary consists of two parts, one dealing with the context of schooling and one with educational content and support systems.

Part I presents an abridgement of materials found in Chapters 1-4 of the main report and outlines the nature of the Commission’s inquiry into provincial schooling, the processes followed in undertaking the study, and the ideas and perspectives guiding this work. In addition, it examines the social environment in which schools operate, the factors that influence the character of schooling, the diversity found among learners, and the circumstances leading to the call for a new school mandate. Because no recommendations are made in Chapters 1-4, we are able to provide a slightly more detailed treatment of text than we can for the summary treatment of later chapters in the report.

Part II summarizes the text of Chapters 5-8 in the main report and provides a complete list of the Commission’s recommendations, divided by chapter as they are in the source document. This part of the summary examines four major components of provincial schooling—the curriculum, the teaching profession, funding mechanisms for education, and the system that exists for school governance and administration. A final chapter returns to the question of a new mandate for education and suggests how this may be achieved.
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Creating a Legacy: The First Steps</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Society, Schools, and the Learner</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Learners in Profile</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Responsibilities of Public Schooling</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The Curriculum</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The Teaching Profession</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Financing Provincial Schools</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Support Systems for Learning</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Framing a Mandate</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. Creating a Legacy: The First Steps

The Royal Commission study of British Columbia schools was initiated March 14, 1987, by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. Terms of reference instructed the Royal Commission to “inquire into and ... report on education in the Province from kindergarten through grade 12.” These terms of reference suggested the context for the task:

The Government of British Columbia believes that education is a lifelong process embracing many facets, including personal development, career preparation, the enhancement of creativity, self-discipline, mature judgement, and a broad range of life skills, not the least of which is curiosity—the love of learning.

Education, therefore, is not limited to an institutional setting, but may be greatly impacted by educational institutions, their goals, and the adequacy of their procedures in meeting these goals. We believe that quality, effectiveness, and relevance of the province’s schools and post-secondary educational systems have an enormous impact on our success. British Columbia today faces unprecedented challenges as the result of fundamental economic and technological change. The government has concluded, therefore, that it is timely to clearly evaluate where we are going in education and to select the most appropriate and cost-effective means of meeting our objectives.

Objectives were defined as including the development of a population that is “well prepared to meet the rapidly changing challenges of everyday life in the 21st century.” The Royal Commission was asked to address educational issues to do with enhancing the quality of the system, its mechanisms for accountability, its teaching methods and curricula, its structures for governance and administration, and the involvement of parents, teachers, and the general public.

In the light of these instructions, the Royal Commission has sought to:

1. report on the state of British Columbia schools today in both public and non-public sectors;
2. identify areas of difficulty or concern as part of an assessment of the present and future needs of the system;
3. identify the kinds of preparation programs that school graduates will require to meet the challenges of the next two decades;
4. determine what school programs and administrative processes should be implemented to deal with current and emerging problems; and
5. recommend responsible action based upon its understanding of the system’s characteristics, its priorities, and the social and economic factors that affect school operations.
The study was initiated in response to important changes that have taken place in British Columbia society since 1960. Royal Commissions on education are infrequent undertakings, in this province and elsewhere in Canada. They occur about once every generation and are generally regarded to be important educational milestones, events that signal a point of departure in our thinking about education and its importance in our lives. Such studies allow us to reappraise our educational efforts, to look backward and forward in time, to preserve what is good and enduring, and to consider the changes we can make to produce even more effective ways for people to learn. They provide an important opportunity for people to express their views and, in doing so, to shape educational policy and the values and priorities we place on learning.

Since 1960, when the work of the previous Royal Commission on education was tabled in the Provincial Legislature, our educational and social concerns have changed in many ways. The energy and activism of the 1960s raised our consciousness about individual rights and equality of opportunity issues. In the 1970s, we learned first-hand about energy shortages and threats to our environment. In the 1980s, we have become more conscious of problems to do with health, the economy, and our role in the international world.

Over this period, we have also become the best educated generation in history and many of us enjoy opportunities and a material abundance unknown to our parents or grandparents. We recognize, also, that the character of our society has changed. Traditional definitions of family have been modified by time and circumstance. Families tend to be smaller than they were a generation ago. Schools now operate in a provincial society where a majority of people do not have school-age youngsters. Many individuals now live alone or raise children as single parents. More women participate in the work force today than ever before, many of them taking their rightful place in occupations that were once male preserves.

Our population is aging and our birth rates are low and possibly declining—two social factors with profound meaning for educational and social planning. British Columbia culture has reflected new immigration patterns, becoming more diverse and pluralistic; in law and custom we now recognize minority, cultural, and language rights unsecured a generation ago. As part of the broad social change which characterizes the 1980s, people have also become more interested in taking charge of their own lives, in participating more in the decisions that affect them, and in relying more on self rather than institutional initiative to create opportunities for personal development.

Such changes have significant implications for provincial schools and for educational policies in general. The initiation of the study recognized that a reassessment was necessary if we are to look forward to the future with confidence.

The Royal Commission's work is timely for another reason. Over the past two decades, disagreements over various aspects of provincial
educational policy have sometimes sharply divided British Columbians, in some cases to the extent that the quality of schooling for children has been imperilled. In recent years, widespread concern about the leadership and control of the system, and uncertainties to do with educational finance and planning, have caused tension as well as a sense of malaise throughout the system and the provincial community it serves. In recent years, too, it has become apparent that education, particularly public schooling, is no longer the growth industry that it was in the 1950s and 1960s, when it generally enjoyed unqualified public support. Increasingly, public schooling has been forced to compete with other social services, particularly health, for its share of funding. This has had unfortunate effects on the morale of school professionals and the public they serve.

The Commission, through its analysis and recommendations, hopes to foster a new educational accord in British Columbia. This is, indeed, a compelling cause: to leave a legacy of value for our children and the future they represent.

The more than half-a-million youngsters now attending schools in British Columbia will be the people who lead and shape our society as we reach the year 2000 and beyond. Each one of them will influence the world of tomorrow. They will help determine what values and traditions we preserve, what ideas and knowledge we will hold, and, ultimately, what we represent collectively. The child entering the first grade of school this year will graduate at the beginning of a new century and a new epoch in human history—a fact, in itself, which amply illustrates the importance of schooling not only to individuals but to all of us as a society.

For much of the past year, Commission staff travelled throughout British Columbia to listen to what the people of this province had to say about their schools. We spoke with youngsters, their parents, their teachers, and school officials in a variety of settings, from traditional one-room Hutterite schools to modern high schools featuring the latest technical innovations. In more than 24,000 kilometres of travel, we visited schools from the Liard River in the north to the Juan de Fuca Strait in the south, from the Peace River country in the east to the Queen Charlotte Islands in the west. In all, we visited 139 schools in 89 communities and held 66 public hearings; we held 54 meetings with teachers and were invited to participate in 23 student assemblies. During each hearing, members of the audience who did not wish to speak publicly were invited to submit their views about schooling in written form to help guide the Commission in its deliberations. The fact that over the past year the Commission received almost 2,350 written and oral submissions, from individuals and groups in all parts of the province, attests to the public’s great interest in schooling in British Columbia.
Over the course of the Commission’s work, many meetings were held with representatives of local business and labour communities, government agencies, and provincial organizations with special interest and expertise in education. We also consulted with advisors on a wide range of topics, and with research teams addressing six specific areas: schools and society; the learners of British Columbia; curriculum; teachers; finance; and governance and administration.

Drawn from the community at large, leaders in other fields provided valuable advice in the reports of three Working Community Groups: one on parents’ rights and responsibilities, one on pre-school needs, and one on the articulation between school and work. A report was also commissioned, and gratefully received, from a task force of 54 senior secondary students who convened from communities throughout the province.

The Commission’s report first examines the social context in which young people learn and in which schools operate, and seeks to identify the social, economic, and other factors that influence education. Here we attempt to portray the variations that exist among learners and among provincial schools themselves, as well as how such variations reflect the different social circumstances, lifestyles, and beliefs about education that describe the people of the province in the late 1980s. Against such a background, we consider public aspirations for schools as both educational and social institutions, the relationship of schools to the home and other institutions charged with the care of the young, as well as public and professional calls for a new school governance mandate which reflects the nature of British Columbia society today and the place of the school in the lifelong learning of individuals.

Emphasis shifts in the second part of the report to examine in some detail four critical areas of concern to the Commission:

- the nature of the school curriculum and how it serves our young people;
- the professional responsibilities, activities, and preparation of teachers;
- the appropriateness of the current school finance system; and
- the relationships among governance and administrative systems and their role in facilitating learning.

The Commission’s attention returns throughout the report to two general topics of discussion. The first is the need for a school mandate and the clarification it will offer for the school’s mission and operation. The report in its conclusion returns to the question of the mandate for education and attempts to present a framework from the elements set forth in the preceding chapters, for use as a guide to the process that will lead to the final formulation of the mandate.
Throughout the report, emphasis is also placed on how decisions about educational objectives and policies reflect the ways in which choices must often be made among competing social and educational values. Philosophical and ideological conflicts about educational issues have indeed become a part of British Columbia life in recent years and must be acknowledged as such. In line with social and political developments elsewhere, British Columbians have sought since mid-century to participate more freely in deciding the important educational and social questions of the day. Whereas important civic issues were once often decided out of public view, decisions about social and educational policy now increasingly take place in the broad daylight of public debate.

Many debates about education and schooling are really debates about larger philosophical and ideological issues concerning such matters as the role government should play in people's lives, the rights of the state versus the rights of the individual, and the relationship between private interest and the public good. Not surprisingly, in a provincial society characterized by its diversity and pluralistic interests, such fundamental questions are manifest in educational as well as in other terms. Throughout the study, the Commission found its attention engaged by many such issues, including that of parental and state rights in children's education, the debate over public and non-public schooling, the tensions that exist between values of equality, access, and affordability, the need for stability and the need for change, the relative advantages of central as opposed to local governance, the freedom to act and the need for accountability, the ideal of choice and the need for equality and standardization, to mention but a few.

The purpose of the inquiry has been threefold.

- First, through its public hearings, its receipt of submissions, and its meetings with community leaders and organizations, the Commission took as its primary task to listen to what the people of British Columbia have had to say about education and the school's role in the educational process.
- Second, in line with this public and professional input, the Commission initiated a series of research studies to examine some fundamental and vexing issues relating to the provision of educational services in the province.
- Third, on the basis of information and perspectives generated from these sources, the Commission has attempted to develop and present a coherent understanding of the school's role in British Columbia society today and the meaning of education to a provincial community that is experiencing important social and economic changes. The Commission's views and findings are outlined in the recommendations it presents and in the descriptive text surrounding each recommendation.
What British Colombians Said

British Colombians offered a consensus on what constitutes a good school and a good school system.

“Issues have adversaries—winners and losers. (For education) the wins are superficial and the losses are profound.”

In the course of the inquiry, as British Colombians described the importance of education and the schools they admire, they offered a consensus on what constitutes a good school and a good school system. Almost everywhere, for example, people spoke about the school’s importance in providing for children’s achievement.

Achievement, in the minds of many with whom we spoke, was the essence of ‘good’ schooling—schooling that would allow youngsters to express their understandings and innermost feelings, to ask imaginative questions, to discriminate wisely among choices, to acquire a sense of the consequences of action, to know their culture and the culture of others, to enjoy their own and others’ sensibilities, to make their way in the world, and, ultimately, to contribute to the wider social, economic, and spiritual good of the community.

As schooling was seen by parents and by youngsters themselves as an active process, the responsibility for creating schooling that responds to people’s needs was seen to be something which required public involvement. British Colombians brought to our attention, again and again, the fact that schools reflect the society they serve and that, if the public does not support schools—and those who study and work in them—with its time and interest, it has only itself to blame for whatever dissatisfaction may be felt.

Related to the issue of public participation in schooling was a cluster of concerns to do with the operation of the provincial system itself. People deplored the confrontational character of provincial schooling in the 1980s and raised questions such as: “Why can’t we have better cooperation between levels of government and between school professionals and the government?” or, “Why can’t we have a less volatile educational climate?” Such concerns underscored a deepening sense of frustration and impatience with the political storms that have troubled British Columbia. As the staff of one school observed, bluntly but accurately, in their written submission, “The fundamental problem with education in this province is that it is perceived as an ‘issue.’ Issues have adversaries—winners and losers. Unfortunately, in this case, the wins are short-term and superficial and the losses are profound and affect us all.”

Throughout the study, individuals spoke and wrote about the need for school programs and operations to recognize the diversity that exists in British Columbia society. Public emphasis on diversity was many-sided. To some, it was a question of making greater provision for individual differences among learners, addressing such issues as pupil streaming, differential programs in elementary schools, and the general challenge of furnishing young people with school experiences to match their interests and abilities. To others, it was an issue intertwined with the preservation of cultural heritage, religious preference, or language. Diversity also had a geographic meaning. In some instances, when people spoke of diversity they dealt with the importance of recognizing the distinct identities of regions, communities, or even neighbourhoods, and the need to allow local schools to reflect such differences in their offerings.

Numerous submissions, too, addressed issues to do with access.
For some who came forward to speak to the Commission, the subject of access was geographically defined. They spoke, often with passion, concerning the problems of rural and isolated schools, transportation difficulties posed by school populations spread across large catchment areas, and, in some cases, about the physical and other challenges faced by some special education and handicapped children. Access was also discussed in relation to the scope and depth of school curricula and the choice of course offerings. Again, this issue of access was generally raised in non-metropolitan areas where secondary schools tend to be smaller and where course selection at senior levels is more limited. Finally, access was viewed by some parents, students, and community members in instructional and methodological terms. Such a focus usually centred on whether instructional materials and teaching techniques were comprehensible to learners, a question that pertained especially to special needs children or those whose learning abilities were impaired or disadvantaged by linguistic differences or social circumstance.

Along with diversity and access, people also spoke about choice in schooling—an issue, in itself, that proved complex in meaning. In the largest sense, choice was expressed as a fundamental democratic right, especially as it concerned the primacy of parental over state rights in children's education. Many who appeared before the Commission argued for greater choice and variety in schooling as a means of recognizing individual differences among youngsters, as well as acknowledging parental rights to select the academic, social, and moral atmosphere of schools in accordance with their own philosophical beliefs and values. Others, however, no less cogently underscored the need we have for schools to sustain, in their curricula and practices, the experiences and bodies of knowledge that should be made common to all children.

In general, British Columbians seemed to believe that choice was too restrained within the public system. Some expressed the view that high schools, for example, should define their programs more specifically along academic, general, vocational, or other lines to ensure a better fit between student interest and school mission. Parents repeatedly made the point that schools should be able to accommodate the special needs, interests, and talents of their children and that increased parental and pupil choice, as well as the increased responsibility attendant with it, would ultimately promote greater levels of service and satisfaction.

Choice, of course, was a salient feature of discussion about non-public schooling. Various individuals and groups observed that the choice made available in the non-public school sector explained the growth in popularity of such schools in recent years. Much was made of the fact that non-public schools could target their educational and other objectives more narrowly than public schools and, thereby, accommodate certain kinds of learners or satisfy parental and pupil choice for specific academic, social, ideological, or religious reasons. The emphasis on standardized school curricula and operational practices found in most public schools, some felt, hindered public schools in addressing the variation that now exists in British Columbia society.  

As well as diversity and access, people spoke about choice in schooling.
Concern was raised about the lack of provincial control over some non-public schools.

Public and professional concern was also raised about the lack of provincial control over some non-public schools, and strong arguments were advanced to increase the inspection of such schools as well as to protect the educational welfare of children in home schooling. As things now stand, the Commission learned, it is difficult to describe what kind of schooling occurs in some small non-public schools, or even to gauge exactly how many youngsters are being schooled at home.

One final theme that ran through much of the public discussion should also be mentioned: the concept of accountability, or what was sometimes termed responsibility. It was widely observed that the public has a right to hold its institutions accountable for the quality of services they render and the decisions they make, at least to the extent that these decisions are under the control of such institutions. Accountability, as it was discussed, meant the provision of different information to different people for different reasons—to the public about the school's effectiveness and problems, to parents and students about individual progress, and to school staff about the planning, processes, and policies determined at governance and administrative levels. A less frequently expressed but equally important aspect was raised in discussion about the level of accountability that might be expected from parents and youngsters, as well as from other agencies involved in the care of the young.

In summary, then, the emphasis placed by parents, the public, and educational professionals on the foregoing topics greatly shaped the perspectives and values of the Commission. As the study progressed, the inter-relationships among these ideas became clearer; so did the cohesion they offered as organizing concepts for the Commission's work, their relevance to British Columbia schools and society in the 1980s, and the way in which their translation into recommendations might point the way to the schools we require in years ahead.

The Commission's Approach

This study of provincial education differs in emphasis from other educational studies commissioned earlier this century. It is, at once, both broader and more selective than previous inquiries. Although it takes as one of its purposes a review of provincial schooling from Kindergarten to Grade 12, it is not strictly a school survey of the kind common to earlier years. Although it seeks to understand the strengths of the current system and where it can be made more effective, it is not intended to be an educational audit that measures school productivity or efficiency. Although it is concerned with bringing about change, it should not be confused with studies that outline ambitious plans for 'school reform' or that seek to ascribe culpability for educational failure. Rather, this Commission has sought to inform British Columbians and their government about the complex undertaking that is modern schooling, as well as the choices and options that must be considered if we wish to develop educational policies that are responsive to our current and emerging social circumstances and values.
2. Society, Schools, and the Learner

All societies seek certain objectives. Apart from their general goals to sustain and perpetuate themselves as social and cultural entities, they attempt to make provision for the social, spiritual, physical, and material betterment of their citizens. They do so in a number of ways but principally through their major institutions—the home, religious organizations, voluntary groups, and, in modern societies particularly, through state-supported social service agencies. Each of these institutions in various ways contributes to what is known as the social capital of a society, or what may be otherwise defined as the general social investment in health, welfare, learning, or other forms of protection and care that a society bestows upon its members.

For much of human history, the family was the agency most responsible for the provision of this social capital. With the coming of the industrial age, however, and the shift from an agricultural to an industrial and service-type economy, the social cohesion and continuity afforded by the family, the land, and the small community began to break down in the face of urbanization and highly differentiated kinds of employment. This important social change, which began in Britain Columbia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, led to the expansion of government involvement in areas of human development and support which were once the sole domain of the family. Modern society has come to rely more heavily on its publicly funded social service institutions to meet the physical, educational, social, and economic needs of its citizens.

The publicly supported and voluntary social service organizations found in Britain Columbia today differ little from those found in other regions of the Western industrialized world. What is important to understand, however, is that such agencies can only provide a part of the social capital that some children ordinarily receive in stable and enriched family environments. Some British Columbia youngsters in the late 1980s depend far more heavily on such non-family sources of nurture than do others, and we must recognize that the relative absence or presence of this social capital in youngsters who attend school has, in some cases, immediate and profound implications for their ability to learn and for the school’s effectiveness in teaching them. No discussion of provincial schooling or the purposes of education can proceed in any meaningful way without first recognizing the importance of this social capital and how it affects children’s lives, their capacity to learn, and the character of the schools they attend.

To understand the character of British Columbia education today, we must also understand that British Columbia schools are part of a complex provincial society that has been shaped by a variety of geographic, economic, and social forces. The following discussion surveys some of the major factors that have influenced and continue to influence the character of schooling in British Columbia and examines the role that schools have come to play in our lives.
Few factors have had greater impact on provincial development than British Columbia's unique geography. From the establishment of the first schools in the 1850s to the present day, government and school leaders have wrestled with the question of how to deliver and administer school services efficiently across a province which occupies almost 10% of Canada's land surface. It is nearly quadruple the size of Great Britain, 2.5 times larger than Japan and larger than all U.S. states except Alaska. Only 30 nations are larger than British Columbia. Problems of size and distance, formidable in themselves, have been compounded by the province's rugged physical landscape—high mountains, steep valleys, dense forests, and surging rivers. Such natural barriers, and a population thinly scattered across much of the province, have had important influences on the course and character of provincial life. Most obviously, they have posed enormous problems to do with cost and access in delivering educational and social services to interior, northern, and isolated communities.

As geography and distance have shaped regional identities within provincial boundaries, the social character of the province itself has been shaped and enriched in a larger sense by its own diverse cultural heritage.

The historical roots of multiculturalism in this province may be traced to the distant past, when the ancestors of today's First Nations People established their settlements in the region that is now British Columbia. Many centuries later, in the early modern age, the second chapter in the story of British Columbia multiculturalism began when the first waves of European navigators contacted the indigenous people.

Two events in the twentieth century have been instrumental in transforming British Columbia into the truly multicultural province it is today. The first of these involved the changing patterns of Canadian immigration after World War II, particularly in the late 1950s, late 1960s, and late 1970s when hundreds of thousands of New Canadians arrived in British Columbia and elsewhere across the country to start fresh lives.

The second factor which ensured the multicultural character of British Columbian and, indeed, Canadian life in general was the emergence of a federal multicultural policy two decades ago. This policy acknowledged that Canada had become a multicultural nation and formally recognized the fact in the appointment of a Minister of State for Multiculturalism and the establishment of a permanent directorate to address multicultural matters. The recent enshrinement of legal protections for minority cultures in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms has further reflected the spirit of this policy.

Even before the emergence of a federal policy for multiculturalism, and even before the most recent waves of immigration, schools were expected to help ease newcomers into the mainstream of provincial and national life. Immigrants, too, have long considered schools as institutional gateways to a better future for themselves and for their families. What has changed in recent decades is that they do so within a social and legal context that, more than ever before, acknowledges and celebrates
the social diversity that distinguishes us as a province and as a nation. Today, we look to the schools to help us sustain a climate in which racial, religious, and linguistic differences will be both understood and appreciated, even if such differences are not easily accommodated within the framework of any one system.

This commitment to multiculturalism means that we also look to schools to foster healthy inter-group attitudes, to break down cultural stereotyping, and to organize themselves in ways that ensure equality of treatment and equality of access for all minorities. Finally, it means, too, that we look to schools to preserve diverse cultural heritages through language instruction and through other studies in history, geography, art, music, or drama to remind us who we are today and from what culture we once came.

Like geography and culture, economics, too, directly and indirectly shapes the context in which schools operate. Schooling was defined as a provincial responsibility and subject to the control of provincial authorities under the British North America Act. Historically, at least, the extent to which the province has been able to support its schools has been tied to the strength of the provincial economy. In a province long dependent for much of its operating revenue on the productivity of the resource industries, support for schooling and for other services has been influenced by international demands for natural exports. This characteristic is not unique to British Columbia, or even to Western Canada, a region generally affected by the strength or weakness of resource markets; it is shared by jurisdictions around the world marked by resource-driven economies.

Provincial economic development has also shaped provincial views about the support and value of learning. From the fur trade and the gold rush era more than a century ago, British Columbians have earned their living with their hands. In a frontier society, made up principally of immigrant peoples, emphasis was placed first on the practicalities of survival. What this has meant, however, is that there has been a subtle but powerful and longstanding tension between the call of the frontier and the call of the school bell. The forces of our own history may have caused us to overlook the important contributions that men and women of science and letters have made over time to the economic and cultural wealth of the province.

Recent international developments put into sharper focus the relationship between learning and British Columbia’s economic prospects. Natural resources will no doubt continue to provide considerable employment; however, recent advances in technology and automation, as well as a broad international shift to economies based increasingly on information and knowledge, rather than on resources or manufacturing, have serious implications for the provincial future and for the role that schools or other learning agencies will play in our lives.

People today speak of nations and individuals who may become “knowledge rich” or “knowledge poor” as a result of their commitment
New social forces have transformed the family from a stable social unit to a more fragile institution.

toward developing intellectual and technical expertise. At the same time, social, business, and educational leaders emphasize the concept of lifelong learning and sketch out a world to come in which greater numbers of us will be involved in some form of learning for much of our lives, at home, at work, or in more formal educational settings. If we accept current forecasts about the importance of a knowledge-based economy, or about the likelihood that mobility within and across careers will increase, then the idea of lifelong learning and the need for continual growth in knowledge and skills holds special meaning for practical as well as for other reasons.

Statistical data on employment and the economy suggest several important trends:

- a decided provincial decline in employment in export industries, which in earlier days traditionally provided work opportunities for young, unskilled labour;
- the fact that much of the recent growth in provincial employment has taken place in service industries, and industries that require educated workers or workers with some form of advanced skills; and
- volatility within the overall economy itself which suggests the need for a broader range of skills and competencies, on the part of young people especially.

Such an employment environment and the likelihood of intensified economic competition from other regions around the world argues strongly for providing higher levels of education for the young and for equipping them with the kind of educational preparation that will help them adapt to change, learn new skills as employment circumstances demand, and become generally more entrepreneurial in their attitudes toward work and establishing themselves in a career.

Perhaps no social institution in North America has changed more dramatically since mid-century than the family. In broad terms, the family of the early 1950s, for example, was typically presided over by two parents—one a homemaker, the other a breadwinner. For the most part, the family life of two adults and three children was secure and predictable. Domestic life was typically characterized by a division of labour. Work patterns were similarly divided. Men went to work; women, in the main, stayed at home after marriage. Middle-class values were well entrenched throughout society. Parents generally encouraged their children to work diligently, to succeed in school, and to prepare for the world of work.

Many social changes have taken place since this time with the result that the family of the late 1980s is a different institution from the family of three decades ago. For example, families today are smaller in size than in the past; the number of lone-parent families has increased considerably as has the number of families headed by women; in addition, the number
of childless families is growing faster than families with children. Though marriage remains popular, the number of marriages which end in divorce has increased significantly.

Family life has been also appreciably shaped by important changes in the status of women, and by the role women now play in provincial economic life. Occupations and careers once the domain of men have been opened to women. In 1983, 51.5% of married women with pre-school children in Canada were participating in the labour force, compared to 34.1% in 1975. In British Columbia, 42.5% of all women were working outside their homes in 1985. Of women with families, more than half, 54.5%, were gainfully employed—49.5% of the women with children under 3; 55.0% with children 3 to 5 years of age; and 69.1% with children 6 to 15. Changes in family structure, together with the need for increasing numbers of women with children of pre-school and school age to work outside their homes, appear to be irreversible and have important meanings for education, not the least of which is that certain aspects of child nurture once the prerogative of families have, by circumstance, been transferred to the schools.

In summary, then, new social forces, some disruptive in nature, have transformed the family from a generally stable social unit, which ideally provided children with the means for growth and subsistence as well as the confidence to participate in the social life of the community, to a more fragile institution, which may not always have the resources to ensure the proper development of the young or their preparedness to succeed in school. Moreover, the traditional role of the family as the principal agency of social security for the young as well as the old has changed over the last half-century as government programs have reduced the family’s longstanding welfare functions to the incidental in many respects.

In recent decades, the character of schooling has been shaped by new cultural forces; one of the most influential of these is the concept of leisure. This emphasis, although now common to the Western world in general, is reinforced within British Columbia by a climate and topography which accommodate summer and winter sports, as well as by historically established athletic traditions.

The fact that leisure has become an integral part of our lives has obvious and important implications for schools. Schools in the 1980s function within a social context in which the work ethic is no longer as dominant as it once was. In recent years, British Columbians have increasingly sought to balance work and career aspirations with quality-of-life considerations, frequently viewed as opportunities for leisure. This means that schools must address objectives to do with the social and personal development of the young, as well as more traditional objectives to do with transmission of knowledge and intellectual development. Operating within a leisure-oriented society also makes it more difficult for schools to insist upon rigorous work habits for pupils; in a society where the idea of play is celebrated so widely, the meaning of work is not always readily apparent to youngsters.
Youngsters in provincial schools now have access to more than 20,000 computers.

Schools, too, are increasingly asked to respond to changes in family and work life by expanding their custodial and monitorial roles in children's lives. As single-parents or both parents may be working, new pressures are being placed upon schools to lengthen their hours of operation, or to offer structured extracurricular sports and other after-school activities to compensate for levels of care and supervision traditionally provided by families but no longer available. An emphasis on leisure also has generally opened up discussions about the school's role in various aspects of health and lifestyle education and has led to new courses targeted toward reducing unwanted pregnancies or health risks for youngsters, or alerting them to the physical and psychological dangers of substance abuse.

As in all modern societies, the character of British Columbia life is also being reshaped by recent advances in technology. Underlying this transition is a new communications structure which is as important to the information age of today as rivers, railways, highways, and airways were to the industrial age. The changes brought by such new communications networks affect the way we live, the way we work, how we interact with others close to us and far away, how we use our leisure time, and how we are educated. Because the world's stock of information is now doubling every two years, specific knowledge and skills are giving way in importance to the ability to process and assess information quickly and effectively, and to apply it in solving problems and making decisions. Such a change obviously has significant meaning for schools. For example, methods of instruction are already changing to take advantage of what the computer can do; youngsters in provincial schools now have access to more than 20,000 computers; and it is apparent that the school curriculum and, indeed, the nature of the learning process itself is being transformed by such technology.

British Columbians have long looked to schools as important social institutions, as pivots upon which communities turn. This was true in the early days of provincial settlement when rural life often centred around the one-room schoolhouse. Not much has changed. Even as we approach a new millennium, we look to the school, as we have in the past, to sustain the social life of communities through the provision of opportunities for recreation, adult education programs, classes for parenting, extracurricular activities for children, or simply as a place for civic meetings. The school remains an institution that pulls people and communities together, an institution that stands at the crossroads of individualism and cooperation.

Recent social changes have renewed public interest in the school's capacity to preserve, or even restore, ideas about community which we hold dear. The growth in urbanization, population, occupational and social differentiation, and social diversity and ethnicity have led in recent years, some suggest, to a vanishing sense of community and to a weakening of the bonds that hold us together. Significant changes in family life have also focused attention on the school's place in the contemporary
community and many families are more dependent on schools today than ever before. The advent of two working parents, a rise in the number of lone-parents, the emergence of a new emphasis on individual careers, earning power, and the use of leisure have led, in some cases, to an apparent weakening in family bonds and to diminished levels of parental responsibility. Accordingly, schools have increasingly been expected to assume a larger role in child rearing, the nurture of the young, and the supervision of youngsters' play activities.

There is no simple way to summarize the extent to which today's provincial schools differ in character and purpose from the early colonial structures where British Columbia youngsters first gathered to learn. The portrait of the school in the late 1980s that emerges is a complex one, but no more complex than the provincial society it serves. The school is, in many ways, a reflecting pool. It mirrors, with relatively little distortion, the expectations, values, and purposes we expect to see embodied in its programs and operations. If its objectives are diffuse, it is because ours are too; if its clientele is heterogenous in nature, it is because we, too, are a diverse society; if it seeks social justice and equity, it is because we, as a province, hold such values; if it is confused at times by the whirlwind of new knowledge and technological advancement that sweeps around it, it is because we, too, have difficulty adjusting to change.

The provincial school system consists of two sectors—one public school sector that is large and publicly funded, and one smaller non-public school sector comprised of independently organized schools, some of which receive partial support from public revenues. What follows is a brief description of the types of schools found in each sector, and the numbers of students enrolled in each type. Our interest has been focussed on studying these schools and the youngsters who attend them.

In the British Columbia public school sector, six basic forms of school organization exist to accommodate youngsters from Kindergarten to Grade 12. Currently, these divisions consist of:

- 1,130 elementary schools which enrolled 287,548 Kindergarten to Grade 7 students in the 1987-88 school year;
- 71 schools with 16,809 students from Kindergarten to Grade 10;
- 25 elementary-secondary schools, which enrolled 7,606 students from Kindergarten to Grade 12;
- 83 junior-secondary schools, with 41,103 students in Grades 8 to 10;
- 173 secondary schools, with 120,920 students in Grades 8 to 12; and
- 16 senior secondary schools, with 15,529 students in Grades 11 and 12.
There are 1,498 regular public schools in British Columbia, which enrolled 489,515 pupils in the past year.

In all, there are 1,498 regular public schools in British Columbia which enrolled 489,515 pupils in the past school year, or approximately 93% of all the youngsters attending school in the province. In addition, there are also, under public jurisdiction, 14 containment centres for youngsters legally detained, 30 provincial resource program centres for special education children, and 24 other schools to accommodate various needs, bringing the total number of public school institutions to 1,566. In 1987-88, about 67% of the youngsters who attended public schools did so in centres with populations of 65,000 or greater, while 33% attended schools in smaller centres.

During 1987-88, 11,064 students registered for at least one correspondence course: 90 in Kindergarten, 1,316 in Grades 1-7, and 9,658 at the secondary level. Students at the elementary level generally register for a full program; at the secondary level, the greater number—8,729—are part-time students who typically enrol in one or two courses at a time. It should be noted that, of these part-time students, 73.4% attend school. These students enrol either in courses not offered at their school because of the school's small size or in courses not available to them because of timetable conflicts. In all, 36 courses from Kindergarten to Grade 7, and 105 courses from Grade 8 to Grade 12 were offered during 1987-88. The Province of British Columbia, under Section 19 of the School Act, also makes provision for the education of a number of youngsters in places where there are too few children to warrant the establishment of a public school. At present, approximately 80 youngsters throughout the province are served by itinerant instructors in 14 locations.

Within the non-public school sector of British Columbia, schools may be generally described in two ways: according to the level of partial support they receive from public funds or according to membership within the Federation of Independent Schools.

To become eligible for provincial funding, an independent school must first incorporate as a non-profit society and, following incorporation, operate successfully for one year. Group 1 schools receive a grant for each student equal to 10% of the local per-student operating costs. Group 1 schools are not obliged to follow the provincial curriculum but are bound not to teach any material that may be judged to be religiously intolerant, racist, antisocial, or seditious.

Non-public schools classified as Group 2 schools by the British Columbia Ministry of Education receive a grant for each youngster which is equal to 35% of the operating costs of educating each child in the public school system of the surrounding school district, providing they follow the provincially prescribed curriculum, participate in specific pupil-testing programs, agree to regular external evaluations of the school, and verify that all teachers in the school are presently certified or will be certified within five years of the application.
Currently, there are 207 non-public schools designated by the Ministry of Education as Group 1 and Group 2 type schools: of these 21 are classified as Group 1 and 186 as Group 2.

The non-public school sector can be generally described and divided in another way. The Federation of Independent School Associations (FISA) lists 154 member schools in four associations with a total enrolment of 30,255 students. This represents approximately 85% of all non-public school enrolment. Apart from the 154 schools with FISA membership, there are also 162 known non-member schools in the non-public sector with an enrolment of approximately 6,000 students from Kindergarten to Grade 12. In addition to those attending non-public schools, it is estimated that between 1,000 and 3,000 children of school age are currently educated at home.

There are at least 316 non-public schools, enrolling about 36,250 students.
3. Learners in Profile

British Columbia learners reflect the wide diversity that characterizes British Columbia’s society. As we began to reflect upon how best to describe this diversity among the half-million youngsters who attend our schools, it became clear that a statistical treatment alone would not adequately capture the range of expectations of these learners or how they relate their school experiences to other aspects of their lives. For this reason, Commission staff interviewed a selected group of 63 students from Grades 3 to 12, in both public and non-public schools located in both urban and rural areas, and representing various ethnic groups and different levels of advantage.

It was interesting, but not particularly startling, that the learners we interviewed approached school, generally, with a utilitarian perspective. They looked to schools for the benefits they could gain from them, rather than a desire to pursue learning for its own sake. Yet the young people we interviewed held personal and social views about the importance of their own learning. For the most part, they portrayed learning as an intensely personal activity which provoked the imagination and kindled a spirit of challenge. They viewed learning also as a group activity, one to be shared with friends and classmates. They valued teachers who provided them with opportunities to take risks and strive for more than they thought they could achieve, and who could also create that sense of belonging to a group in which all members could share in the challenge.

What was more troubling to the Commission was the number of youngsters who expressed no goals for themselves. This was more apparent in children from disadvantaged rather than advantaged backgrounds. Life for many of them was characterized more as an unfolding of events than as a journey toward a distant but partially visualized destination.

We note, also, that many of the children we interviewed, even those who stated clear goals for themselves, were unsure about how they should achieve their goals. Similarly, from interviews with parents, we found that many parents were uninformed about possible career paths open to their children. Without question, schools have much to do in educating both learners and parents about the range of careers and opportunities that exist. As we see it, the efforts schools undertake in this regard occur too late in the students’ school careers to be of much assistance and usually do not involve parents. In a similar vein, the curriculum is startlingly inadequate at the senior secondary level for learners not planning to attend a post-secondary educational institution. Most of the secondary students we interviewed, even those headed to college or university, sought greater variety, choice, and relevance in course selection.
Finally, the diversity found among the students we interviewed, as well as the diversity revealed by our statistical and other data, speaks clearly to the challenges society faces in providing educational and other services for young people. In Chapter 4 of its report, the Commission examines more directly the meaning of this diversity for educators, its implications for the way we attempt to organize and bring to bear social and educational resources on behalf of young people, and what such diversity suggests to us about the nature of the mandate schools require to operate effectively in the 1980s and beyond.
4. Responsibilities of Public Schooling

Throughout the twentieth century, the school—and particularly the public school—has assumed far greater responsibilities than ever before in meeting the diverse developmental needs of youngsters. Broad social movements have resulted in the de-institutionalization of children once cared for by other jurisdictions, and have contributed to the increasing heterogeneity of school populations. Children with physical or mental challenges, or other special needs, are now within the mainstream of school life; this change has had important ramifications for school policies and for the extent of services schools are now expected to supply.

Such changes have led to confusion on the part of educators, the public, and policy makers regarding the public school's role in society and the tasks schools should perform. Uncertainty about the public schools' role, and the role of educators today, was often expressed to the Commission. Classroom teachers, school governance officials, and school administrators, in particular, argued for greater clarity in defining educational activities and purposes, as well as delineating more precisely the school's relationship to families and other social institutions.

This issue was defined by many as a question of mandate. The Commission was advised repeatedly, "We need a mandate, we need to know what the schools should do." Those who made such statements, however, were not always in agreement about what 'mandate' meant. Often it was used ambiguously to refer to educational goals as well as issues about the school's social responsibility. Nevertheless, the fact remains that no other issue was brought to the Commission's attention as frequently, or with as much concern, as the question of mandate.

Confusion about the purpose of schooling is certainly not new. Since the establishment of the first public schools in British Columbia more than a century ago, we have looked to schools to support our social structure in numerous ways. Schools have been viewed as multi-purpose institutions whose endeavours go far beyond educational functions; various public elements at various times have seen schools as agencies for civic development, as laboratories for democratic practice, as institutions to sustain a common culture and common values, as places to remediate the behaviour of wayward youngsters, and as centres for community life. Within the public imagination, the potential of schools has sometimes seemed boundless.

The school as we have come to know it, fulfils three major social functions. First, schools provide custodial service; they are valued as places where children can spend time in relative safety and under the care of adults while the adults in their own families work. Second, schools serve to socialize children and adolescents to the norms and values of their society. Although the first agency of socialization remains the family, the school socializes children to a community broader than that of the family. In schools, children meet other youngsters from other parts of society and learn attitudes and abilities different from what they learn at home, but necessary for community participation and for entry to the world of work.
Third, the school performs an educational function. In schools children learn the set of basic skills which enable them to continue to learn throughout their lives. Schooling, however, represents only the beginning of lifelong education; many other formal and informal activities contribute to a person’s educational development, not all of which take place in schools. If we tabulate, for example, all the hours that make up the life of the average person today, we can estimate that only two to three percent of those hours are actually spent in school—a fact frequently overlooked by the public, and sometimes by the educators, when they set ambitious social tasks for the schools.

These social functions are carved in the granite of tradition and will remain an essential part of any mandate for schooling, however they are described. Schools, as they are constituted in our culture, can never escape such responsibilities, which remain fundamental to the very nature of the institution.

**The School’s Educational Purposes**

The school’s primary social function is to educate youngsters. How schools should best do this has been discussed and debated since the beginning of the Classical Age. Over the centuries, civilized societies have come to ascribe four major educational purposes to schools, purposes strongly supported in current educational writings. The Commission regards these as the four purposes to which the provincial school system should aspire.

**Cultivation of Mind**

The school’s first educational purpose is to cultivate the mind. This means that youngsters should learn how to think at advanced levels. To teach children facts without teaching them how to reason about those facts, or make critical judgements about them, is to deny youngsters a high quality education. It is impossible to reason, or to make critical judgements, without thinking about something. The development of expertise in anything requires both knowledge about a subject and the capability to think deeply about that knowledge. It is senseless to talk about developing children’s higher order thinking skills independent of the subject matter to be learned. The first question of education is to determine what is worth learning and, then, to decide the nature of learning required in order to think in a sophisticated manner about that subject.
The cultivation of the intellect and the acquisition of knowledge associated with it are noble educational ends in themselves. Education has its own intrinsic worth; it is better, we believe, to be well educated than to be poorly educated. The cultivation of the intellect is also seen by society to have considerable social and economic value for the individual. A person can convert a good education into higher earning power. Substantial research supports this claim; the world of work rewards those who can think flexibly and solve problems in creative ways.

The third educational purpose of schools has to do with moral and civic development. Although we recognize that the development of moral and civic responsibility in the young is a task shared by a number of social institutions, including the family, religious organizations, and various civic agencies, society continues to look to schools to encourage development in these two areas.

Moral development and preparation for civic life constitute particularly important educational ends. Young people at school today are forced to consider many difficult moral issues and their consideration of such issues is made even more problematic by the diversity in social values that marks the society in which they live. They must learn to answer for themselves; for the future generation they represent, an array of ethical questions must be faced in the realms of social relations, science, technology, and medicine. Through education, they learn how individuals can reason clearly about vexing moral issues and choices, and what it means to act in morally responsible ways consistent with such reasons and choices.

Furthermore, through social studies, history, and other courses at school, youngsters learn something about the nature of the democratic system of government we enjoy. Here they learn that governments such as our own do not work well unless citizens recognize and act on their civic obligations to their communities, and that the preservation of democratic principles and institutions requires participation by citizens in community, regional, and provincial affairs. If participation in provincial life is based entirely on self-interest, we put at risk some of the most cherished qualities of democratic government.

The fourth educational purpose to which the school directs itself concerns individual development. Schools can and do encourage young people to develop a sense of self-worth, to find personal challenge in the world around them, to find satisfaction in their achievements, and to understand their own individuality. Within school classrooms, corridors, and playing fields, young people begin to define for themselves a meaningful role in life, a reason to work hard, and a sense of who they are. Sometimes their striving for individuality means that they conform more
closely to a peer culture than to an adult culture—that is all part of growing up. What is important is that within the social life of the school they learn that “to belong” does not mean that they must always conform to the group, that within all people are the roots of uniqueness, and that all are worthy of dignity.

Pressures to Expand the School’s Social Responsibilities

Over the past two decades, schools have gradually assumed other social responsibilities to do with the broad developmental needs of youngsters and the assumption of such responsibilities has led, in recent years, to considerable discussion and debate about whether schools should render such social services. Because the school organization, with its captive population, offers society its most systematic point of contact with youngsters, the school represents an ideal and efficient organizational structure by which to deliver a variety of health and other social services to young people. For that reason, there is an organizational imperative behind the school’s expansion into the social domain.

There is also the factor of proximity. When a child is troubled or underfed, or if a child cannot benefit from schooling because of learning or other disabilities, it is the teacher, the other students, and the school who must live with these difficulties. The child, or the child’s problem, will not simply disappear if untreated. So it is, therefore, in the interest of educators to deal with such problems—and, indeed, the educational profession itself attracts to its ranks those who are motivated by the idea of such social service.

When these two factors are put together, they help suggest why the school’s social role has expanded in recent decades as family and other social structures have been destabilized in the wake of broader social forces. For many youngsters the school has become a haven, a place of stability and shelter in an otherwise turbulent world. The school, too, represents an opportunity for such youngsters to gain greater access to the social resources and support systems that are instrumental to any youngster’s learning or general development.

Examining the School’s Social Role

In its study the Commission paid no greater attention to any question than that of the school’s social role. In addition to the careful examination of submissions on this topic, Commission staff met with representatives from government agencies, non-profit groups, school officials, and teachers, as well as others involved in the social care of the young. From such sources the Commission learned that schools confront formidable obstacles in providing extensive support services for youngsters. What we frequently heard was that if a child had a serious problem that fell clearly within the jurisdiction of a particular service agency, then that child’s problem would be addressed. However, we learned that these agencies
typically define their own responsibilities in such a way that only extremely pressing problems, or problems described very narrowly, were likely to be addressed by them. Consequently, ‘marginal cases’ often fell between their jurisdictional boundaries.

We learned also that such agencies of government commonly understood that schools were already providing basic services such as counselling, speech and language therapy, mental health services and, even in some instances, social workers to find foster care placements, and that such ‘marginal’ cases would no doubt be attended to by the school. In other words, what we believe has happened is that some of these agencies, all of which operate within their own resource limitations, have defined their own responsibilities in ways that require the school to assume a greater social service role.

The Commission is concerned with the school’s willingness to address the full range of problems children encounter. Schools, it must be recognized, face certain significant limitations in providing specialized services. First, using school funding to provide expensive ancillary services creates a drain on resources intended for children’s education. Second, educators, in the main, do not have the proper training required to develop and implement many social service-type programs. Third, properly trained senior professionals are not usually available in school systems to supervise the design, delivery and evaluation of many specialized services. So, educators are left with a complex problem. On one hand, schools have agreed in recent years to provide a far wider range of services than they traditionally supplied. On the other, the quality of that service is not generally guaranteed, because of the school’s inability to develop and supervise these services.

Problems associated with providing social and educational services for disadvantaged children, or for those with special needs, either chronic or acute, are not unique to British Columbia. Jurisdictions throughout North America face similar problems and have sought resolution in different ways. One strategy which promises to be useful is to create greater opportunities, and requirements, for local communication among the representatives of the various social services to ensure that youngsters’ needs are being addressed at the local level. A problem which severely limits the effectiveness of existing interministerial committees is that they have neither a budget to pay for services nor binding authority to act, and, consequently, their decisions and recommendations do not necessarily produce action. Also, no formal mechanisms presently exist for the resolution of disputes when children or their families feel that adequate services have not been rendered.

The Commission advises the public schools to define their roles in narrower terms than they do now. To expect the school to satisfy all but the most severe social and developmental needs of the young is to weaken, in fundamental ways, its ability to discharge its primary educational objectives. This simply cannot be allowed to happen.
A narrow social role for schools means broader responsibilities for other agencies. Moreover, the school’s ability to achieve its educational purpose will continue to depend on how well various social services agencies address the developmental needs of children in a concerted manner. As a society, we cannot allow children to be denied the opportunity to develop as fully capable adults. Nor can we, as a society, turn our backs on our moral responsibilities to provide such opportunities. Nevertheless, as educational institutions, schools simply cannot be held responsible for meeting all the social needs of children in order to help them grow into fully capable adults. The school, of course, can and, perhaps, should remain organizationally the centre where such services are coordinated and delivered; it must not, however, be made responsible for the provision of such services.

The Commission also emphasizes that neither the provincial school system nor the helping agencies of government should usurp in any way the a priori rights and responsibilities of parents and the family in providing for the overall care of the young. The family remains the most instrumental social institution to provide for the needs of children. The interventions of other institutions in children’s lives, such as social service or other public agencies, should occur only when the family proves unable or incapable of providing the necessary social resources to which children are entitled as full members of this society.
5. The Curriculum

Any considered review of curriculum is challenged initially by the task of definition. For its purposes the Commission viewed the curriculum as a number of related subjects, each directed toward both the acquisition of knowledge and the development of abilities and attitudes. In refining our conceptual framework we identified two dimensions to develop our views: (1) Stages of the Curriculum—Early, Middle, and Late; and (2) Perspectives on the Curriculum—Intended, Implemented, and Attained.

The Early, Middle, and Late Stages refer to curricular modifications which reflect developmental changes in learners as they mature: for example, as students progress through school, the degree of complexity and abstraction of learning tasks and the amount of autonomy and responsibility expected of them will increase. The Intended Curriculum is the curriculum as it is defined in official publications, regulations, textbooks and supplementary materials, and curriculum guides. The Implemented Curriculum is the curriculum as it is interpreted by teachers and brought to life in their classrooms. The Attained Curriculum refers to the outcomes of schooling.

Because the stages of the curriculum relate to developmental changes in the learner, we examined how such developmental notions were organized in the provincial curriculum as it now exists. Current kindergarten programs stress experiential learning, building on the base of the child’s personal experience. The elementary school curriculum focuses on basic skill development and knowledge acquisition and emphasizes the language arts. The junior secondary grades maintain constant course requirements but, through an increasing choice of elective subjects, students can explore some subject areas beyond the basic subjects. Senior secondary curriculum retains a small core of constant courses but provides alternatives in course selection specifically to prepare students for their entry into the work force or further education and training.

Though some difficulties were experienced in determining what was actually taught, the Implemented Curriculum exemplified to the Commission the professionalism of teachers as they shaped the Intended Curriculum in accordance with the needs, interests, and abilities of their students. Two practices—semester systems and streaming—were examined by the Commission to show how the external factors of instructional organization can influence, often in negative ways, the nature of actual instruction and the Implemented Curriculum. Reference was also made to student performance in British Columbia schools. Data collected through both provincial and international assessment and examination programs indicate that our students have fared very well in comparison to their counterparts in other parts of Canada and the United States.

The Commission noted that, at present, curriculum development and implementation processes are highly centralized through Ministry of
Education programs. Review and revision cycles for provincial curriculum have been established but are disrupted at times by political decisions about new program initiatives. Implementation activities organized by the Ministry are relatively limited and do not appear to significantly affect what happens in classrooms.

As a footnote to this review of current curriculum perspectives, the Commission registers its concern about the number of students who leave school early. The educational system—and society it represents—should not be prepared to tolerate a situation in which approximately 35% to 40% of the students who enter Grade 9 fail to meet Grade 12 graduation requirements.

To provide better service to British Columbia students, significant changes must occur in the character of school programs and in the way they are delivered to the classrooms. If curriculum and instruction are to be responsive to the developmental needs of learners then change must begin at the school entry level. Children must be assessed and directed to programs best suited to their levels of development, and school districts should make available a range of different settings designed to accommodate children at varying stages of development. To provide for the wide range of developmental needs, flexibility must be increased in the primary years; the curriculum must facilitate flexibility and responsiveness by removing the rigid structural constraints of the grade system.

The vital importance of the pre-school years in creating the social capital or resources needed for school success is further acknowledged by the Commission. The Commission urges the provincial social services ministries to initiate an examination of the issues in this area and to provide the facilities, resources, programs, and services which will recognize pre-school and child care as social and economic priorities for Canadian families.

The Commission recommends:

1. That developmental criteria, rather than chronological age, be used in selecting the educational placement of children entering school.

2. That the provincial government and local school boards introduce legislation and policy changes to enable schools and school districts to establish ungraded primary divisions.
The Commission envisions both a restructuring of the curriculum and a change in the attitudes of those who activate the curriculum for Grades 1 to 10. During this period of schooling, the curriculum should be made common to all students and should address learners’ needs as well as those of society. The over-arching goal of what we see as the Common Curriculum is the preparation of students for the roles they will play in their adult life. More specifically, we intend the Common Curriculum to focus on developing student knowledge, abilities, and attitudes so that young people can become knowledgeable, critical thinkers who are positively disposed toward learning and who have a sense of their own value as individuals in our society.

The Commission recommends:

3. That the Ministry of Education develop a Common Curriculum for all students in Grades 1 to 10. Further, that the Common Curriculum include the following four categories of subject matter:

   (1) Humanities (English, Social Studies, French as a Second Language);
   (2) Fine Arts (Music, Visual Arts, Theatre, Dance);
   (3) Sciences (Mathematics, General Science, Technology); and

The Humanities category includes English, Social Studies, and French as a Second Language. English should engage students with language in its various modes—reading, writing, listening, and speaking—in conjunction with worthwhile content. We believe that language development should be part of everything students do in school.

Social Studies in the Common Curriculum should focus on investigating patterns and relationships among people in society and in their physical, cultural, political, legal, and socio-economic environments. Students should be encouraged to read about and discuss past and current issues; to question past events and to make predictions based on present information and evidence; and to relate what they are studying to their personal worlds. The study of French as a Second Language should emphasize meaningful language use and practice. Including French as part of the Common Curriculum from its outset, reflecting the national policy of bilingualism, will help students to acquire language proficiency and appreciate the value of learning a second language.

Fine Arts, which includes Music, Visual Arts, Theatre, and Dance, should foster creativity and provide youngsters with alternative modes of thinking. Music, for example, should develop the ability to perform, create, and understand music. Visual Arts should integrate the study of art...
production, aesthetics, art in society, and art history. Theatre should provide for informal drama enactment as well as for more formal dramatic interpretations. Dance should emphasize communication through movement, and how to understand and engage in expressive movement.

Mathematics forms the foundation for the Sciences category of the Common Curriculum. Emphasis should be placed on understanding what arithmetic operations mean and why they are to be employed, estimating and judging the reasonableness of a solution, and dealing with elementary notions of probability and uncertainty. The approach should be integrated, including topics from algebra and geometry as well as from traditional arithmetic. New mathematical concepts or techniques should be introduced in such a way that they reflect real situations where such concepts are employed. The study of science should encourage participation in scientific inquiry by drawing on concepts and processes inherent in the disciplines of biology, chemistry, and physics. It should present students with opportunities to engage in discussion about relationships within the sciences themselves—and among the sciences, technology, and society.

The fourth curriculum category, Practical Arts, encompasses several of the more traditional program areas as well as the emerging lifeskills. Physical Education constitutes a daily part of the Common Curriculum, emphasizing fitness and wellness rather than competitive athletics. Industrial Education shifts in focus from developing student awareness and familiarity with the use of tools, materials and technological processes to providing opportunities for students to employ different technological applications and to engage in activities allowing them to create, design, and construct. Home Economics study should focus on the family and prepare students for family living by engaging them as active learners in inquiry and reflection. Studies in Lifespan Education should be designed to capitalize upon students' experiences and everyday activities as a way of promoting the development of critical reflection and self-awareness. Such studies will include nutrition, personal health, family life, career awareness, and citizenship as well as safety and the use of leisure time.

A long-standing and primary function of schooling is to introduce students to the values, principles, standards of conduct, and moral beliefs which characterize and guide society; moral education in the public schools, in the Commission's view, should emphasize the principles of social justice throughout all curricular and extracurricular activities.

The Common Curriculum also has implications for instructional organization. The framework presented here seeks to integrate the curriculum by illustrating how all subject areas are linked toward developing the same set of abilities and how all are directed toward preparing students for their future roles in life. A major source of instructional tension in British Columbia classrooms has been the lack of congruence between the traditional system of placement in grades and the reality of human
variability. To correct this, schools should experiment with various cross-grade groupings of students and recognize that some students take longer to complete certain learning requirements than others. Research evidence clearly shows that all students benefit when they are grouped heterogeneously and when peer tutoring or cooperative learning practices are employed. The interdisciplinary approach used by many teachers in the lower grades is also endorsed by the Commission and we advise that this teaching approach should be encouraged throughout all the years of the Common Curriculum.

The Commission recommends:

4. That throughout the years of the Common Curriculum from Grades 1 to 10:
   (1) teachers use an interdisciplinary approach in their teaching;
   (2) teachers instruct in a minimum of two different subject areas and work in interdisciplinary teams, at any given grade level;
   (3) the Ministry of Education develop and distribute curriculum documents which provide examples of interdisciplinary relationships and articulation among subjects, and between course content and the life experiences of learners;
   (4) faculties of education develop methodological courses which emphasize and facilitate these integrative instructional approaches.

5. That on an experimental basis school districts and schools provide learners, in keeping with their needs, interests, and varying rates of development and achievement, with access to multi-grade and/or cross-grade classroom groupings, and assess learner progress individually.

   The need for greater choice within the curriculum was cited often in submissions to the Commission. To reduce the element of sameness which can result from the dominance of the prescribed provincial curriculum, we envision more opportunity for locally developed programs as a means of promoting flexibility and responsiveness on the part of the system in meeting the interests and abilities of learners.

The Commission recommends:

6. That the Ministry of Education limit its prescription for the Common Curriculum of Grade 1 to 10 to no more than 80% of the available instructional time. Further, that school districts provide locally developed programs for the remaining school time.
Completion of the Common Curriculum should give students a level of acquired knowledge, skills, and attitudes to move on to programs that lead to either a chosen career or further education. We believe this accomplishment should be recognized in an official, tangible manner by the Ministry of Education.

The Commission recommends:

7. That the Ministry of Education award each learner who has successfully completed the Common Curriculum for Grades 1 to 10 an official certificate of entitlement to an additional two years of secondary education. Further, that eligibility for the certificate be determined by the local school on the basis of criteria established by the Ministry of Education.

Throughout the Common Curriculum years we believe that students benefit from a strong sense of identification with their school community, and especially with the adults in that community. It is important that a supportive environment be established and that students feel a sense of identification with a caring adult in the school and with fellow students.

The Commission recommends:

8. That, in each year of the Common Curriculum of Grades 1 to 10, all learners have access to a teacher advisor or mentor.

In the Commission's view, no area of the school program requires as much attention or reform as does that of the senior secondary school. Historically, we have had great difficulty in designing and implementing a secondary school curriculum that is relevant and appropriate for all students. A core program that is designed to respond to the needs of all future citizens in a changing society, not merely to the minority of university-bound students, requires high priority in implementation. We see that core program including English, both language and literature, in Grades 11 and 12; Social Studies with world history and issues in one year and Canadian history and citizenship in the other year; and a course in Science, Technology, and the Environment in which topical matters could be studied in depth. Physical Education should also be a core component, as it develops understanding of physical and health concepts as well as forming positive attitudes towards health and physical fitness.

In addition to the compulsory core subjects, students should be able to choose from a variety of electives based on both the entrance requirements of post-secondary institutions and the principles of the Common Curriculum. It is our expectation that a majority of students will continue to choose a program of general academic education which preserves for
them the ability to pursue a variety of post-secondary options including university entrance.

But great attention should also be paid to the area of alternative programs. Many secondary schools currently offer a limited number of programs in the skilled trades as well as in business and in human resources. The Commission considers that such programs offer genuine alternatives to students and should, where feasible, be expanded. We wish to stress the work experience component of such programs and suggest that this component be extended and intensified. The larger challenge for the provincial system is to establish other career paths without introducing rigid streaming by academic ability, watered-down courses, and dead-end occupational programs—all of which result in the reduced expectations that so often characterize alternative programs.

Our proposal, then, is to have programs that are different in kind but equal in status to those of the common core. This task will not be easy to accomplish, and will require great cooperative effort and institutional flexibility.

The Commission recommends:

9. That, for the short term, existing secondary school graduation requirements be re-examined by the Ministry of Education with a view toward expanding student choice in course selection leading toward graduation.

10. That when the recommended core program of English, History, and Science, Technology and the Environment is introduced in Grades 11 and 12, secondary school graduation requirements include successful completion of each core subject in addition to those subjects that are required for specific post-secondary or career programs.

We have indicated that our vision of the secondary school programs places a premium on institutional flexibility. As indicated earlier, we believe that every person in British Columbia has the right to two years of publicly financed education beyond completion of the Common Curriculum. The Commission expects that most students will proceed through 12 years of schooling sequentially, without interruption, as they do now. However, the adoption of such an entitlement principle may immediately open up various alternatives to enhance student choice. Students, after successful completion of the Common Curriculum, could enter approved career education programs offered by business colleges, vocational and trade schools, and junior colleges, or enter approved apprenticeship or employment internship programs. It would also make it possible for students who had interrupted their formal schooling in order to work or
travel, to return to their education without penalty. One possible result of the entitlement proposed by the Commission is that it might encourage a greater number of adults to return to school to complete their education.

If various alternative programs are to exist and are to meet the diverse needs of learners at all ages, then graduation requirements must be made more flexible. In addition to the core subject areas, students should also satisfy completion requirements for the particular program in which they are enrolled. We see the extension of Grade 12 provincial examinations beyond the core component to those subject areas in alternative programs where the subject lends itself to those kinds of external evaluations.

The Commission recommends:

11. That provincial Grade 12 examinations be extended to all subject areas and that those examinations count for one-third of the student's Grade 12 marks.

The restructured secondary program reflects learning and organizational principles inherent in the concept of lifelong learning. Learning how to learn and self-directed learning, the Commission believes, will be brought to life throughout the Common Curriculum. We suggest that curricular changes outlined in our concept of the Common Curriculum and secondary school core program, in conjunction with our expectations for instructional change through interdisciplinary and cross-grade teaching, will enhance the individual's pursuit of lifelong learning.

The Commission recommends:

12. That the Ministry of Education, school districts, and schools, in planning and delivering educational programs, incorporate the concept of lifelong learning, so that learning experiences:

(1) relate to an individual's lifespan;
(2) are characterized by open access to learners of all ages;
(3) cater to the widest range of learner interests and needs; and
(4) involve the shared resources of all agencies concerned with education.
The present provincial framework for the curriculum cycle involves processes of planning, development, implementation and evaluation. This framework provides both a conceptual and an operational model for effective program delivery under the authority of the Ministry of Education. With an expanded mechanism for general communication and coordination in the area of educational programs and services, a reduction in program initiatives originating in the broader political and social context, and some Provincial Learning Assessment Program, we believe this cycle can be effective.

The Commission recommends:

13. That, with respect to curriculum development, revision, and implementation in the province, the Ministry of Education:
(1) emphasize smaller, more frequent curriculum changes;
(2) relate such revisions to the continuing Provincial Learning Assessment Program; and
(3) provide the budgetary resources required for a systematic implementation of curriculum changes.

14. That the goals of the Provincial Learning Assessment Program be reformulated to concentrate on the provision of annual data on student achievements (knowledge, abilities, attitudes) in each of the basic subject areas.

We identify extracurricular activities as an important part of any discussion on curriculum. Activities organized at school outside the regular program offer excellent avenues for expanding children’s opportunities to engage in meaningful and diverse experiences, provide schools with additional means to respond to and recognize the individual differences among learners, and contribute generally to a positive atmosphere throughout schools. It is clear that extracurricular programming in British Columbia is a major supplement to the regular curricular experiences of thousands of students. It is also evident that this vital part of the education process is not equally accessible to all. These reasons strongly support the argument for more specific financial provisions for extracurricular programs in provincial schools.

The Commission recommends:

15. That the Ministry of Education include in the funding allocations to school districts a specific category for extracurricular activities, for the purposes of:
(1) recognizing their relationship to, and enhancement of, formal learning experiences of youngsters; and
(2) ensuring equitable access to such activities for all learners.
6. The Teaching Profession

The Commission acknowledges the fundamental place of teachers in the learning environment. Their relationship with children and parents is by far the most important and critical one in education.

We note that the profession is better qualified than ever before, with over 80% holding at least one university degree. We note, too, that the teaching force reflects in its composition the very limited employment opportunities of the recent past, in that there is an aging teacher population with few young teachers who have recently entered the system.

Teaching has always been a complex and demanding activity but never more so than today. Society has changed substantially. The boundaries of knowledge have exploded and many of the basic tenets of teaching and the values that traditionally supported them can no longer be taken for granted. In addition, the provincial education system bears the scars of an often bitter conflict that has raged far too long. An urgent need exists to address the question of teaching as a career and the status of the teaching profession. We need to attract to it the best and brightest of our young people if we wish to make full use of the great intellectual resources that lie within British Columbia. Teaching’s many worthwhile attributes and rewards need to have their value restored in the eyes of the public and potential teachers.

The Commission recommends:

1. That the Ministry of Education, in cooperation with the major educational organizations of the province, initiate and maintain a program designed to raise the status of teaching as a career.

Despite the fact that we have a pool—and some calculate that it is a fairly large one—of unemployed teachers in British Columbia, we will soon face a teacher shortage as the “echo” of the baby-boom generation resonates in the system. Primary grade enrolment is already increasing and, without considering any changes in the pupil-teacher ratio that may result from collective agreements, we estimate that 3,600 additional teaching positions will be needed in the next 10 years.

In addition to new teachers to meet the demand of increasing enrolment, replacement teachers are required annually to take the position of teachers who retire or leave the profession for other reasons. Based on our analysis, the Commission estimates that between 2,500 and 2,800 replacements will be needed over the same 10 years.

Provincial universities now produce about 1,200 teachers who enter the profession each year. Combined with the available pool of unemployed teachers, the Commission estimates that there will be an adequate
The province will face an acute shortage of teachers by 1992, although specific subject areas might well exhibit shortages before then. After this time, the province will then experience an acute shortage of approximately 1,800 teachers per year—an intolerable situation. The Commission does not favour lowering entry standards of the profession or the mass import of teachers from out-of-province (if they are, in fact, available, given similar teacher shortages elsewhere), nor do we favour increasing the pupil-teacher ratio. Instead, this shortage must be met by providing provincial universities with the means to develop the necessary numbers and kinds of teachers needed during the next decade.

The Commission recommends:

2. That the provincial government provide the three public universities with the means to develop a co-ordinated provincial capacity to provide the numbers and kinds of teachers required throughout the next decade. That a tri-university committee be established and supported by government, and charged with a responsibility, in cooperation with the British Columbia Teachers’ Federation, British Columbia School Trustees Association, the Association of British Columbia School Superintendents, and the Ministry of Education, to develop plans for meeting this demand for additional teachers.

Teacher Education

We cannot afford to employ teachers who are not well educated.

It may appear paradoxical to promote stricter entrance requirements and, at the same time, a more demanding teacher education program when we have just forecast a drastic shortage of teachers in three or four years’ time. We do so, however, because we believe that the quality of those teachers must over-ride all other considerations and criteria. In this age of information and complex technology we cannot afford to employ teachers who are themselves not well educated and, thus, not well prepared to educate others. Toward this end, the universities need to examine possibilities for ensuring closer cooperation among faculties of arts, sciences, and education with the aim of ensuring that prospective teachers graduate with a sufficiently broad background in the liberal arts and sciences. And, finally, the Commission places high value on the extended practicum, and believes that supervision of this practicum should become a shared responsibility between the universities and the profession.
The Commission recommends:

3. That all teachers be required to complete a minimum of five years of initial teacher education, including an approved undergraduate degree.

4. That an extended practicum be required as a component of all initial teacher education programs.

5. That the three universities, in conjunction with the British Columbia Teachers’ Federation and the College of Teachers, further develop and extend ways and means by which the involvement of practising teachers in working with student teachers is more formally articulated and rewarded.

6. That the three universities develop on-campus procedures which ensure closer cooperation among the faculties of arts, science, and education in facilitating and discharging responsibilities for teacher education.

   In keeping with our recommendations on teacher education and preparation, the Commission believes that all teachers, regardless of where they teach, be current and competent in their areas of expertise. The requirement that all future teachers hold a suitable undergraduate degree implies that the Standard Certificate is, therefore, not a sufficient qualification for teaching.

The Commission recommends:

7. That the province cease awarding the Standard Certificate and that current holders of that credential be urged to complete degree requirements. Further, that the universities be provided with the means to deliver such degree-completion courses to all areas of the province.

   It is quite apparent that teachers are concerned about their own professional development and they have expressed positive attitudes toward renewable as opposed to life certification. It is also likely true that periodic renewal of certificates as a measure of internal regulation would both reaffirm teachers' commitment to professionalism and result in enhanced public confidence and status afforded to teachers. The Commission believes that criteria for certification renewal should be formulated by the appropriate agency in such a way that, in keeping with our earlier statements on choice, alternatives are available by which the requirements can be satisfied.
The Commission recommends:

8. That the College of Teachers establish the requirements and frequency for the renewal of teachers' certificates.

The concerns raised about qualifications and certification of the teaching force are a direct reflection of the desire to have professionals with full credentials to assist in providing an appropriate education to youngsters. There seems to be no justification for different standards between public and non-public schools; any discounting of standards of excellence runs counter to a basic premise of the province's assurance of excellence in schools.

The Commission recommends:

9. That teachers in non-public schools be required to meet the same general certification criteria in force for public school teachers, and that any other credentials permitting them to teach in those schools be issued on a temporary basis and for a fixed term.

The First Year of Teaching

During our study, the Commission became concerned with the placement of teachers during their first year of teaching and the way in which they were inducted into the profession. While first-year teachers typically feel prepared for classroom life, they are frequently faced with unreasonable teaching assignments (excessive numbers of class preparations or disruptive classes, for example) and placed in situations where there is an insufficient response to their professional needs (ready access to instant and expert advice on the many problems they encounter for the first time during their first year of teaching). In order to ease the entry of the beginning teacher into the rigours of classroom life, induction programs, designed to provide more manageable rites of passage, are often suggested. Successful programs require the application of resources—both human and financial—and might involve more experienced teachers as mentors and formative evaluators, counsellors, and, perhaps, modified teaching assignments.

The Commission recommends:

10. That district-based induction programs be established cooperatively by school districts and teachers, and that they be characterized by special support services and carefully designed teaching assignments during the first year of induction.
Continued mastery in teaching requires the continual accumulation of new knowledge and skills. Professional development is essential to the maintenance and growth of quality in teachers and teachers must be supported in professional development activities. Continued professional development takes many forms—a return to the university environment, independent reading and study, district professional development activities, and distance education are among the possibilities. Among most important professional needs, teachers identify curriculum implementation, teaching design, student motivation, classroom management, and special education. The Commission holds that adequate professional development programs become a regular part of a teacher’s continuing or life-long education, and that the British Columbia Teachers’ Federation, as part of its continuing professional endeavours, assume the responsibility for these programs. Finally, the Commission wishes to draw attention to the particular problems in gaining access to professional development programs by teachers in many communities in the interior and north of this province. The observation that the opportunities for professional development vary widely across British Columbia is inescapable. Special measures need to be taken to improve this situation.

The Commission recommends:

11. That the British Columbia Teachers’ Federation initiate relevant programs of professional development aimed at the improvement of classroom instruction. That the funding formula of the Ministry of Education provide the means for school boards, in negotiation with teachers, to develop creative ways to make regular, extended periods of time available for such professional development.

12. That special measures be taken to improve the availability of professional development programs in rural areas of the province, including consideration of summer study bursaries, travel grants, increased funding for professional libraries, support for university in-service activities in remote areas, and the establishment of regional professional development centres.

Several issues related to the working environment and welfare of teachers were brought to the attention of the Commission during the past year. Although we developed views on those issues, and even drew conclusions in some instances, we made no recommendations. We feel that under the forms of existing legislation, teachers, through their local unions, and their employers can more properly address those issues through the collective bargaining process. We note here, some of those issues to provide an indication of the concerns raised.
Class size was among the most frequently identified issues. Research findings on the effects of class size on achievement are, after four decades of examination, largely inconclusive. What seems to be the case is that it cannot be argued that smaller classes, by themselves, have a decisive impact on the quality of learning. Rather, it is the opportunity which smaller classes afford the classroom teacher for more varied instructional techniques and for more individualized and small group instruction.

Teacher compensation was another issue frequently brought to our attention. Ignoring salary levels, per se, which are properly part of collective bargaining, we noted two characteristics of the current structure of teacher compensation that warrant some mention. First, the present structure is highly compressed: the salary difference between beginning and fully experienced teachers is small. In effect, all salary gains exclusive of collectively negotiated increases are achieved in the first 12 years; teachers, therefore, ‘top out’ in their mid-thirties, with little or no prospect of salary growth beyond that point. To move up in terms of salary, the teacher is required to move out of the classroom and enter administration or leave the profession. Second, the present salary structure does not differentiate between highly gifted teachers and mediocre or marginal teachers of equal certification and seniority. This issue was often accompanied by some reference to merit pay. However, the Commission feels that there is no compelling evidence for the provision of additional remuneration in the form of merit pay.

A third issue raised during the Commission’s work was the issue of teacher competence. School boards and teachers are both sensitive to allegations that the school system and the profession fail to dismiss incompetent teachers. Both recognize that school boards must protect our students from the effects of incompetence and that teachers must keep their professional standards high and protect competent teachers from unjustified criticism.

We note, too, the relationships between the British Columbia Teachers’ Federation and the College of Teachers in this regard, as well as in other matters that have cross-jurisdictional implications.

Although we have dealt with teachers in this chapter, our major concern remains with the learners of British Columbia. The Commission believes that the better educated and more sensitive the province’s teachers are, the more advantaged the learners become. It is in everyone’s interests to attract the best people we can to the profession, and to retain such people to be mentors for our young. For the sake of high-quality teaching and learning, all those who play major roles in provincial schooling must work toward meeting these needs.
7. Financing Provincial Schools

In 1987-88, $2.1 billion was spent on public education in British Columbia. This money was raised from general provincial revenues (approximately 40%), residential and non-residential property taxation (36%), home owner grants (13%), and miscellaneous minor sources. In turn, the monies were distributed, through a specific funding formula, to 75 school districts and 207 independent schools.

Although basic provincial and local divisions of authority date from 1872, the Commission's analysis has focussed on school finances within the provincial and local context over the last decade or so. Within this period marked shifts have occurred in the strength of the British Columbia economy, from growth to recession to recovery. These years also saw an increased public scrutiny of schools, a shift in public priorities from education to health services, and a decline in school enrolments, all factors making it difficult for education to retain a competitive position in securing public funds. This period has also been characterized by the introduction of two distinct financial systems through which the Ministry of Education allocates monies to school districts.

The basic principles governing the provision of financial resources are equity of tax burden, equality of educational opportunity, and cost effectiveness. Adequate funds must be raised in a manner that is fair to taxpayers. These monies must then be allocated so that reasonable standards of educational access and learner achievement are satisfied. The school system must then account, in some acceptable form, for both the funds received and the results achieved. These basic components of a sound funding system are described in detail in the Commission's major report and in the technical papers supporting it.

The Commission, in examining sources of revenue, looked closely at both residential and non-residential property taxation, as well as the Homeowner Grant. We also reviewed the tax-sharing ratios between the provincial government and the school districts. Each of these is discussed here in abbreviated form.

Although the use of personal property as a tax base is clearly not without its problems, the Commission recommends its continuance. Among available tax bases, personal property is clearly superior in guaranteeing some form of local control in education, and in terms of efficiency in administration, effectiveness in compliance, and neutrality in taxpayer behaviour. Moreover, eliminating this source of revenue would impose a heavy and impractical burden on other tax bases, including personal income, corporate earnings, and sale of goods.
The Commission recommends:

1. That the use of property taxation for school purposes be continued.

Since 1982, the province has excluded non-residential property as a taxable source for local school authorities, a factor which engendered considerable negative input to the Commission from several school boards. The government sets rates of taxation for these properties, receives the money into general revenue, and redistributes the proceeds. From its analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of this new system, the Commission favours the current system on the bases that (1) the combined income from non-residential property, far from being universally and evenly distributed throughout the province, is redistributed to the school districts in the province in a more equitable manner, and (2) local control of the non-residential tax base can distort business investment and production decisions. It can also result in disproportionate taxes on local business and industries which are ‘captive’ to the municipality and school district.

The Commission recommends:

2. That the province should continue to set and collect the non-residential school tax so long as all tax proceeds raised from this tax base are redistributed back to the school districts through the fiscal framework.

The Homeowner Grant, provided to British Columbians since 1957, provides lump-sum grants to reduce the property-tax liability of owner-occupied residences. The grant is designed to be first applied to current school taxes, with any remaining amounts available to offset municipal taxes. While compelling arguments cannot be made, conceptually, to support the Homeowner Grant, and while it does not, in essence, reflect defensible taxing principles, it is a politically popular and very visible form of tax relief. As well, the benefits of changing to other suggested models are not deemed to be worth the costs. The Commission agrees with those who brought it to our attention that grants are often used to reduce municipal taxes without regard to educational revenues. This is a practice which should cease.

The Commission recommends:

3. That no drastic changes in the principles and procedures underlying the Homeowner Grant are required at this time. Further, that a mechanism be found to return the unused portion of individual grants to the school districts.
In examining the distribution of funds to various school districts and schools, the Commission considered the questions of adequacy and stability of funding, as well as the nature of the structures in place to determine the funding levels.

The question of adequacy has been debated for years, ebbing and flowing with fluctuations in the economy, and often segmented in its focus upon particular programs of the school system. British Columbia’s support for education, relative to that of other provinces, has fallen during the past decade, a factor clearly reflected in service levels. However, since 1976 spending on education in British Columbia has increased at approximately the same rate as growth in the provincial economy, although very unevenly. Regardless of the current spending levels, and the various perceptions about their adequacy, the Commission has identified areas where additional expenditures are necessary to provide for the school system the Commission envisions. Obviously, future levels of funding will depend upon the views provincial authorities hold about the adequacy of current levels and their response to the Commission recommendations.

We received many submissions which argued for a funding system which would be more stable and predictable than the present system and which would allow for long-range planning. We considered various methods of achieving these results, opting finally for a “block funding” arrangement similar to that employed in federal-provincial transfer payments, and linked, through appropriate indices, to the growth of the British Columbia economy.

We examined closely the “fiscal framework,” the cornerstone of the present funding system, by which the provincial government establishes the recognized costs of the core education program for each district. It is a detailed and complex formula, with allocations to districts reflecting the somewhat differential costs incurred by different boards in different parts of the province.

Although the fiscal framework has been criticized for various reasons—inappropriate design, unrealistic cost factors, lack of true incentives to promote cost effectiveness, and distortion of local district priorities—educational officials have become accustomed to its presence. Its integrity has been enhanced by the government’s willingness to review suggested improvements made by educational organizations. Given certain amendments, the Commission supports the continued use of the fiscal framework.

We do make a case and a strong plea for excluding references to teachers’ salaries in the formula, despite their impact upon costs. School funding and collective bargaining are separate, and governmental spending formulae should not intrude on the collective bargaining process.

**Provincial Operating Support**

Spending on education has increased at about the same rate as the provincial economy since 1976, although very unevenly.

Government spending formulae should not intrude on the collective bargaining process for teachers.
The Commission recommends:

4. That the provincial government:
   (1) replace the present system of calculating recognized costs with a block-funding formula;
   (2) discuss the design of this formula with the major provincial educational organizations; and
   (3) retain the formula in place for a period of five years.

5. That the government remove all references to teachers’ salaries from the funding formula.

6. That the fiscal framework be used as part of the funding formula to set relative funding levels for districts.

7. That the Fiscal Framework Review Committee:
   (1) continue to study and recommend structural changes to the fiscal framework, and
   (2) pay particular attention to simplification and necessary re-structuring of the formula, particularly those functions related to operations and maintenance.

8. That the provincial government not use the fiscal framework to counteract bargaining outcomes.

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Provincial-Local Sharing

The grant allocation generates differences in the tax rates among districts for the wrong reasons.
The Commission recommends:

9. That, in establishing the ratio of sharing school costs between the province and school districts, the provincial government continue to recognize distinct local revenue-raising capacities. Further, that the principle of equity of tax burden be retained.

10. That the provincial government re-design the sharing ratio to ensure that:
(1) districts with similar capacities to raise revenue levy similar tax rates to support the ‘core’ program, and
(2) districts with higher recognized per-pupil costs should not be expected to levy higher tax rates.

11. That the provincial government derive a new index of revenue-raising capacity that will generate more evenness in taxes paid by the average homeowner in each district.

12. That any proposals for change to provincial-local district funding arrangements be a matter of consultation with major provincial educational organizations before they are introduced.

13. That the mandate of the Fiscal Framework Review Committee be expanded to include periodic review of the provincial-school district sharing ratio.

The Commission notes with considerable concern the uneven and unpredictable pattern of capital spending approaches in evidence over the past ten years. With the deteriorating condition of the large number of schools built in the immediate post-1945 period, and in view of the anticipated increases in student enrolments predicted for the next decade, capital spending levels are inadequate in spite of recent improved allocations. Approvals need to be restored to levels which allow for adequate funding of ongoing maintenance, upgrading, and replacement of facilities, and for anticipated new construction. As with general funding, we appeal for greater stability and predictability. Decisions to ensure adequate function and safety can only be made in a fiscally prudent way if school boards know what their capital approvals are to be for the foreseeable future, and not merely for the current year.

Provincial Capital Support

Capital spending is inadequate in spite of recent improvements.
The Commission recommends:

14. That the Ministry of Education restore capital spending approvals to a level adequate to fund the ongoing maintenance, upgrading, and replacement of facilities and major equipment in the school districts of the province.

15. That the Ministry of Education, to ensure greater stability and predictability in capital funding, move to a system of multi-year capital approvals.

16. That the Ministry of Education and school districts develop a special program to respond to the deteriorating condition of the large number of schools built in the immediate post-1945 period.

17. That the Ministry of Education amend, in consultation with the school districts, the formula for sharing capital costs to bring it closer to the formula used for setting operating grants.

Accountability

The Commission believes, in keeping with cost-effective principles, that the people and agencies who have assumed responsibility for educational services should be accountable to those who support them. Public schools are thus accountable directly to school districts which are, in turn, accountable both to taxpayers within the district and to taxpayers-at-large in the province through the Ministry of Education.

Accountability may be divided into two categories, procedural and consequential. The former relates to the processes of administration and the latter to the outcome of these processes.

Procedural accountability includes financial accountability (the requirement to provide a complete and accurate financial accounting of the use of public funds) and compliance (the requirement to comply with the various statutes and regulations). The Commission observed that appropriate measures under both of these headings are in place at the provincial level through the Auditor General. At the school district level, school officials submit audited financial statements to the Ministry of Education. Although there is no formal compliance reporting by, or compliance auditing of, school districts, current management systems ensure due regard to compliance with statutory and regulatory directives.

Consequential accountability, a more complex and difficult undertaking, includes efficiency (the ratio of resources to some standard output or activity such as the number of students), effectiveness (the extent to which the objectives of publicly funded programs have been achieved), and cost-effectiveness—the linking of a measure of effectiveness (such as the number of school graduates continuing to different types of post-secondary education) to efficiency (such as cost per student).
evidence of this form of accountability is available. The public gains only a restricted view of what it receives for the resources it devotes to education.

In part, the reason for this apparent deficiency can be traced to the limited reporting of available information. Schools, for example, have traditionally seen the main target of such information as the parents, principally through report cards sent to the home and through school-based activities that engage the immediate school community (such as parent nights and parent advisory committees). At district and ministry levels, important consequential measures include the provincial learning assessments at Grades 4, 7, and 10, the Grade 12 provincial examinations, and the external accreditation of high schools every six years. Full results from these indicators are reported mainly to professional and elected educational officials. Taxpayers with no children in school, who as a group comprise approximately 70% of all taxpayers, receive only limited results.

Moreover, the measures described above are generally measures of educational outcome; links to measures of efficiency are rarely made in terms that allow public assessment of cost-effectiveness. As with other social programs, the Commission notes, procedures for relating effectiveness and efficiency measures in clear and unambiguous ways are complex and difficult to execute. Nor should we forget that only some educational outcomes lend themselves readily to analysis of cost-effectiveness; others of great value do not. The results of a good education are not always immediately apparent, nor do they necessarily show up on a balance sheet of inputs and outputs.

From the public’s point of view, and its embodiment in the view of provincial authorities, improved accountability by districts is necessary. From the districts’ point of view, persuasive representation of ‘value for money’ would enhance their prospects of attracting adequate and stable funding in a climate of fierce competition for public resources. It remains true that accountability is not an end in itself, and must be approached in a pragmatic, developmental way consistent with feasibility. There is clearly no point in requiring districts to spend so much time being accountable that they have no time to do anything to be accountable about!

Considerable obligation also exists for those who receive accountability information to use it, and to use it in a way which provides suitable incentives to those held accountable. It would, for instance, be perverse to establish and act on the basis of performance measures which failed to capture the primary objectives of the activity measured, and drove teachers to teach to the performance test rather than the intended (but unmeasured) larger task. It would be equally inappropriate to require information on value for money and yet continue funding in a manner unrelated to demonstrated performance.
The Commission recommends:

18. That the Ministry of Education, school districts, and schools take steps collaboratively to improve their accountability processes. Further, that in doing so, the following suggestions made to the Commission be considered:

(1) the development of outcome measures related to established educational objectives;
(2) the establishment of methods for relating outcome data to financial data and use of resources; and
(3) the initiation of improved and more extensive means of periodically communicating such data to constituents.

19. That the Ministry of Education support district accountability initiatives with increased financial resources and expertise.

Management structures, systems, controls, and practices appear to be well designed to serve procedural accountability, and, to some extent, the value-for-money question of economy in purchasing. However, they do not serve the broader value-for-money issues of efficiency, effectiveness, and cost effectiveness as well as they might. The absence of planning mechanisms and approaches to collecting—far less reporting—data on costs and educational outcomes is particularly apparent; the Ministry of Education should work consultatively with districts to ensure that improved management systems are designed and implemented in all districts, with particular attention to reporting to the Ministry and the public.
8. Support Systems for Learning

This chapter is about governance and decision-making, about stating purposes and choosing directions, about leadership. Inevitably, therefore, it is about people: those in positions of authority and responsibility in the school system. Under this heading, we also address a number of important matters which appeared episodically as we considered learners, teachers and the curriculum; these are issues that demand the attention of people who shape policy and make decisions.

Governance and administration without vision create bureaucracy without a sense of purpose. The wheels turn but make no contact with the road. The education system in this province needs to develop a sense of purpose to chart the way and to inspire people while doing so. And that purpose must be apparent at all three operational levels in the system—the provincial level, the local district level, and the school level.

Inherent in the three following recommendations is a process of cooperation and involvement among the major provincial organizations with special interests in schooling. This province has seen enough conflict. The system can do nothing but benefit from the establishment of structures that involve those with legitimate interests working together for the sake of learners.

The Commission recommends:

1. That the Ministry of Education establish, by statute, an Education Advisory Council, which would meet quarterly to discuss matters of significance respecting British Columbia’s system of education. That membership include representation from each of the following organizations, such persons to be named by those agencies: British Columbia School Trustees Association; British Columbia Teachers’ Federation; Federation of Independent Schools Association; the university community; Association of British Columbia School Superintendents; British Columbia Principals and Vice-Principals Association. Further, that the council include representation from each of the following segments of the British Columbia society: students, parents, the business community, the labour community, and the arts and scientific communities.

2. That a Provincial Curriculum Committee be established, as a standing committee of the Education Advisory Council, for the purpose of advising the Minister of Education, through the Education Advisory Council, on matters affecting curriculum development, implementation, and evaluation. That membership include representation from the Ministry of Education, British
Columbia School Trustees Association, British Columbia Teachers’ Federation, the university community, students, parents, business, labour, and the arts and scientific communities. Further, that the Committee be granted authority by the Education Advisory Council to establish ad hoc specialist sub-committees necessary to complete its tasks.

Parents

Parents are the most important people in the consultative process.

The Commission believes that the most important people who should be represented in the consultative process are parents. Theirs is a natural interest and they wish to be involved, not necessarily in the active governance structure but in an advisory capacity to school authorities and school districts.

The Commission recommends:

3. That each of the 75 school districts of the province adopt policies and procedures which provide for a designated role for parents and other community members through membership on parent-community advisory committees at the district level and at each school within the district.

School District Leadership

Many submissions stressed the importance of local control in schooling, so that decisions are made by people who are close to the action. We concur with that view and see no reason to change the present system of elected school boards. However, as administration becomes more complex and decision-making more crucial, we see the value of continuity in the length of service for school trustees and indicate a method for achieving this.

It is predicated upon the belief that (1) the possibility of a complete change over of board membership at an election is potentially disruptive; (2) the people need to express their will regularly; and (3) trustee resignations should be dealt with in a smooth, routinized way.

The Commission recommends:

4. That the term of office for school trustees be four years, with approximately one-half of the board elected every two years. Further, that a by-election be held on each election date to fill any vacancy created by the resignation of any trustee unable to complete a term.

School district operations need greater organizational clarity.

We see a need for greater organizational clarity in school district operations, given that recent legislation has created new levels of administrative officers responsible through the superintendent of schools to the school board within a district. The Commission believes, for reasons of accountability and precision, that school systems are best served by the
appointment of a single chief officer who is the prime technical advisor to the board, the principal executor of board policies and procedures, and the chief manager of all school district staff. At the same time, we note that the tenure of senior administrators is clearly at risk where they are required, by allegiance to their clientele and through the knowledge they possess, to make recommendations which some members of the board find threatening or incompatible with their preferences. We believe this can be avoided by establishing procedures to maintain fair employment relations for those who serve school boards.

The Commission recommends:

5. That there be a statutory requirement that every school board appoint a Superintendent of Schools as Chief Executive Officer and a Secretary-Treasurer as a corporate and financial officer responsible to the Superintendent.

6. That provisions be made to regulate employment relations between a school board and its central-office appointed officials, so as to include conditions for regular evaluation and due process, and that the wording of such provisions be prepared in consultation with the British Columbia School Trustees Association, the Association of British Columbia School Superintendents, and the British Columbia School District Secretary-Treasurers Association.

The Commission wishes to underscore the critical role which school principals have in the educational system; they are the critical on-site co-ordinators of physical and human resources and the implementers of provincial and school district policies and procedures within the purview of the local community, parents, and students. Everything we said respecting board relationships and contractual arrangements with central district office staff applies equally when considering the leadership function of principals.

The Commission recommends:

7. That school districts afford each school principal maximum flexibility in determining how funds allocated to the local school may be spent.

8. That provisions be made to regulate employment relations between a school district and its principals and vice-principals so as to include conditions for regular evaluation and due process; and that the wording of such provisions be prepared jointly by the British Columbia School Trustees Association and the British Columbia Principals and Vice-Principals Association.
We strongly support the continuance of elected school boards.

Following our analysis of the presence (or indeed the absence) of intermediate governing units, the Commission strongly supports the continuance of elected school boards. In our view, this system of intermediate governance of education through publicly elected boards of school trustees, is appropriate for the school system in this province. The structure is responsive and accountable to its immediate environment, allows for ready recourse and redress, assures regional implementation and supervision of essential provincial programs and initiatives, permits the promotion of local adaptations, allows for direct parental involvement, and is able to mediate, close to the scene, socio-economic and value differences existing in the region.

The Commission recommends:

9. That the present system of elected school boards be retained.

The remainder of this section is devoted to seven very compelling circumstances in British Columbia which relate directly to the provision of an accessible educational system in British Columbia. They have been chosen by the Commission as worthy of special elaboration and attendant recommendations. In order, they are:

(1) educational inequality in rural and isolated areas;
(2) provision of non-public schooling;
(3) accessibility to home schooling;
(4) the education of First Nations children;
(5) accessibility for learners to non-instructional support services;
(6) accessible programs for special needs children; and
(7) providing appropriate opportunities for female learners and graduates.

Many submissions received by the Commission spoke of challenges to education caused by the province's vast and formidable geography. The problem of delivering equal school services and ensuring equal educational opportunity across mountains or sea and in areas with thinly scattered populations is one that has continually vexed provincial and local school authorities. Today, at a time when new kinds of employment are replacing British Columbia's traditional reliance on resource industries, all students, regardless of where they live, require access to sound school programs and post-secondary opportunities. Related to the provision of these programs and opportunities are the serious difficulties some school districts, particularly in the northern regions of the province, experience in attracting and retaining teachers. Likewise, of concern to the Commission are the financial problems students from rural and
remote areas face in attending post-secondary institutions. Time after time, the Commission was reminded about the seriousness of these issues, and their impact upon the morale of students, parents, and teachers in rural areas.

The Commission recommends:

10. That the Ministry of Education convene an ad hoc committee composed of representatives from British Columbia School Trustees Association, British Columbia Teachers' Federation, Association of British Columbia School Superintendents, British Columbia School District Secretary-Treasurers Association, and the Ministry of Education to promote the recruitment and retention of competent teachers in rural and remote school districts. Further, that this committee consider the following suggestions made to this Commission:

(1) The extension of pilot programs designed to train teachers from, in, and for rural and remote areas;
(2) The provision of substantial bonuses for effective teachers who remain in such areas, such monies to be available on completion of designated periods of service;
(3) Identified periods of service by graduates of teacher education, tied to student financial assistance for tuition and related expenses, provided in advance by school districts; and
(4) Improved and extended professional and cultural environments made possible by paid opportunities to travel periodically to and from centres providing a wider range of such opportunities.

11. That, insomuch as evidence abounds that children and young adults in rural areas appear less aware of post-secondary opportunities than their urban counterparts, universities, colleges, and technical institutions make special provision to acquaint rural schools with their entrance requirements and programs with particular attention to the matter of transfer credit.

12. That, in order to equalize access to post-secondary institutions for deserving students from rural areas, the provincial government provide substantial assistance in the form of grants to those students who must live away from home.

13. That the Ministry of Education ensure that provincial budget allocations to remote school districts clearly recognize the need for trustees, central office administrators, principals and vice-principals to:
(1) augment their service capacity by bringing in considerable specialist human resource assistance on an ad hoc basis and
(2) develop their own capabilities and levels of service by making frequent excursions to meet formally and informally with professional colleagues beyond the district.

Non-Public Schools

No issue is more trenchant than public financing of non-public schools. The proponents of non-public schools argue passionately for choice, diversity, and education based on clearly articulated value systems. Their opponents argue with equal fervour that such schools are characterized by elitism, selective admission policies, and education based on religious biases or social advantage, and thus should not receive the financial support of the state.

The Commission sees merit in arguments on both sides as well as many misconceptions that each side has about the other. Our wish is to encourage choice and diversity, both within and outside the public education system, but we have a concern that all schools meet certain requirements and are carefully monitored.

The Commission recommends:

14. That provisions and regulations for the establishment, registration, and operation of all non-public schools be specified in relevant sections of the School Act.

15. That the Ministry of Education obtain from all non-public schools the statistical and other data pertaining to their operation in order to provide a full annual picture of schooling in British Columbia from Kindergarten to Grade 12.

16. That, in the interests of ensuring equality of educational opportunity for all youngsters throughout the province, all non-public schools in British Columbia be required to meet certain basic curricular, assessment, and inspection requirements established by the Ministry of Education and defined in the School Act.

17. That four categories of non-public schools be established for funding consideration under the School Support (Independent) Act, as follows:

Category 1 – those schools which fully meet all curricular and teacher certification requirements as set out in the School Act;
Category 2 – those schools which currently satisfy criteria established for ‘Group 2’ classification and support;
Category 3 – those schools which currently satisfy criteria established for ‘Group 1’ classification and support; and
Category 4 – those schools who neither meet criteria for Categories 1, 2, or 3, nor wish to avail themselves of financial support. The categorical funding levels for Category 1, Category 2, Category 3, and Category 4 schools shall be 50%, 35%, 10%, and 0%, respectively, of the public per-pupil allocations to the school districts in which they are located.

Between 1,000 and 3,000 British Columbia children are currently educated at home by their parents. The School Act manages at one and the same time to make this appear illegal and to provide a number of grounds on which it can be legally tolerated, if not justified. The Commission concedes the right of parents to make these decisions but, because of our concern for the learners, with regulated practice.

The Commission recommends:

18. That provisions be included in the School Act to recognize the existence of home schooling.

19. That students who are educated at home be registered by their parents at the public school nearest to their residence.

20. That each school district, through the principal of the local schools, provide home schooling students with the required textbooks and curricular and instructional materials appropriate to their grade level. Further, that the school and the home cooperate in any other ways, mutually acceptable to both parties, to enhance the learning opportunities of the homeschooled.

21. That each homescooling student be counted by the school district for funding purposes as at least 0.25 of a full-time equivalent learner.

22. That the Ministry of Education determine means by which the learning progress of home schoolers can be monitored and assessed on an annual basis.

Few educational matters engaged the Commission's attention as much as our consideration of what is required to provide a sound education for First Nations children. Past experiences with residential schools, current socio-economic problems, the mixed record of our school system in providing successful experiences, and the appallingly low rate of graduation are sad chapters in a tragic story.

Yet, paradoxically we are heartened. Submissions from First Nations bands not only expressed poignantly the disasters of the past but pointed out ways to a better future for their children. We are encouraged by the resolve of Native council and band members toward overcoming such
First Nations bands pointed out ways to a better future for their children.

difficulties; we are also heartened that many teachers and school personnel work strenuously toward the same ends. They face an enormous task. Nevertheless, the Commission believes they can be assisted considerably in their efforts to help First Nations children preserve their rich cultural heritage and, at the same time, learn the skills and knowledge necessary for a satisfying life in the larger cultural context of British Columbia society.

The Commission recommends:

23. That the federal and provincial governments accord to Native bands and councils the appropriate authority and attendant resources to enable them to engage effectively in the self-determination of, or shared responsibility for, the education of their children. Further, that financial resources commensurate with meeting the actual costs of educating Native learners be available to bands and councils.

24. That, where Native children are enrolled in schools and/or school districts, Native peoples and school authorities jointly develop formal liaison processes to discuss and decide upon the maintenance and improvement of quality service to Native learners.

25. That Native bands and councils and all school authorities cooperate in assisting Native learners to bridge their two cultures (Native and multicultural), by:

1. improving home/school liaison, particularly throughout the early years of schooling;
2. orienting all children, through formally developed curriculum units, to the history, culture, status, and contributions of First Nations people;
3. reducing the impact of an inflexible graded school system upon Native children and allowing, in the early years of schooling, for a continuous, incremental pattern of learning;
4. initiating means of assisting Native peoples in the preservation and promotion of their heritage languages, including their incorporation into classroom experiences;
5. discouraging any evidence of racial bias on school transportation and premises;
6. deliberately appointing or enlisting the volunteer support of competent Native adults as role models for all children;
7. encouraging teachers to improve their knowledge and understanding of Native cultures, heritage, and traditions through individual initiative organizational support; and
8. providing continuing counsel to Native students to prepare them for living and working in a multicultural society.
26. That compensatory actions be initiated by Native councils or bands, school authorities, and governmental agencies, to:

1. Improve the pre-school and early-school-years language capabilities of Native children;
2. Enhance the parenting skills of Native adults;
3. Encourage Native adults to pursue advanced levels of basic education; and
4. Improve the health, social, and economic circumstances of First Nations people, as ends in themselves, and in terms of their potential positive impact upon the learning of Native children.

At the heart of the vexing question of the school's social role is the issue of support services for children in need. We are all familiar with reports of hungry children at school. Our investigations revealed other areas of need that are met by the appropriate agencies only when a crisis occurs. Schools are trying, without a clear mandate and without appropriate resources, to deal with those children who are only steps away from insurmountable problems. We note, too, that situations in schools are as varied as life itself. Some schools may have occasional instances of children in some sort of urgent need; others may have significant numbers who are permanently at risk.

We are left, then, with a compounded problem, for which we ascribe no blame. Professional workers in all institutions with a responsibility for services to needy children are dedicated, industrious people who care about children, parents, and the public. But the fact remains that the developmental, social capital needs of youngsters facing moderate to severe problems are not being adequately addressed. They must be.

The Commission takes this simple and straightforward view. Without usurping parental roles and responsibilities, the state must—for the sake of children and for the continued good of the state itself—intrude and act when children are at risk. Those activities can be centred around the school and the immediate community and services can be delivered by the appropriate agencies in co-ordination with the school authorities. Where those co-ordinating structures already exist and are working well, let them be capitalized on; where they do not exist and they are needed, let them be established; and where they are not needed, let them not be created to exist without function. We are concerned about children, not about establishing more bureaucratic structures.

When teachers can be assured that their students are being cared for in other ways, then they can get on with their proper educational tasks with clear hearts and minds.

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Non-Instructional Support Services

Situations in schools are as varied as life itself.
The Commission recommends:

27. That the Ministries of Education, Social Services and Housing, Health, and the Attorney General be charged with responsibility to develop, collectively, appropriate mandates for each ministry which allow for the provision of services to those children who have been identified by school Interministerial Committees as in need.

28. That school Interministerial Committees be provided with the necessary resources to carry out their responsibilities so that all British Columbia students can capitalize on their potential for learning.

The recent past has seen many changes in approaches to students with special needs, not the least of which has been the integration of handicapped youngsters into the mainstream of school life. That integration has brought attendant arguments about placement, the need for changes to physical plants, and the need for trained professionals and auxiliary personnel. Despite these arguments, and with some uncertainty in the research literature pertaining to the identification and delivery of services to special needs youngsters, the Commission was able to draw some conclusion from its analysis.

The Commission recommends:

29. That present policies, programs, and services aimed at providing appropriate learning experiences for special needs learners of the province be continued.

30. That the appropriate ministries of the provincial government provide additional educational support services for both special needs learners and their teachers in normalized classroom settings.

31. That, where necessary, special needs learners and their families be provided with extended social and educational services designed to assist learners in overcoming the educational challenges they face.

32. That rights of special needs learners and their parents be enunciated in the School Act, together with provisions by which any disputes between parents and school authorities would be referred to, and settled through, appropriate third-party action.
Schools have a particular responsibility to ensure that they do not contribute in any way to stereotyping and the inequalities that it can promote. Changes in family structure and in patterns of economic life dictate that females should not have artificial or 'image' limitations placed inappropriately on their hopes and expectations. Young women need to see more role models in leadership and management positions both within and outside the schools. They need to have textbooks free from gender stereotyping and they need more positive counselling about core studies and career opportunities. Women need, as never before, flexible working guidelines so that their roles in the work force and at home can be more easily accommodated.

The Commission recommends:

33. That school districts provide appropriate counselling to female learners to influence them in selecting a wide range of appropriate courses in their school programs including, particularly, mathematics and the sciences. Further, that school districts give explicit attention to the hiring of additional female counsellors as role models;

34. That the Ministry of Education monitor all curriculum materials to be used in the schools of the province, with a view to (1) eliminating inappropriate gender stereotypes, and (2) including content about the contributions of women to our cultural and intellectual heritage.

35. That Ministry of Education and school district hiring practices give explicit attention and emphasis to the potential appointment of females in management and administrative positions.

36. That school districts and teachers' unions, in establishing employee contracts, establish flexible working conditions for women which allow for an appropriate combination of professional employment and family child rearing.

The Commission early in its work recognized that many of our recommendations, if accepted, would need to be codified in legislation and that such changes would be embodied ultimately in the School Act. In fact, so important is that legal document, relative to our analysis and suggestions, that we considered seriously the possibility of attempting to provide the government with sample sections of a revised Act which would reflect the thrust of our recommendations. Time constraints moved that challenge beyond our grasp.
In short, a need exists to upgrade the *School Act*. On close scrutiny, it reveals its true identity in that it represents, in large measure, the scope and intent of its 1872 origins, having had only one major revision in 1957-58. We have been convinced that it has received ‘band-aid’ treatment for decades and that it contains sections which do not acknowledge many realities of the 1988 educational system. Some have claimed that it may hinder, rather than help, certain essential functions of schools and schooling.

The Commission is aware that a number of Ministers of Education, recognizing the statutory outdatedness of the *School Act*, worked diligently with their senior appointed officials to prepare new statutes for legislature approval. All made progress toward this end, and much material pertinent to the task resides in Ministry files. But the assignments were never completed. Given the presence of the major consideration of educational initiatives represented by this Commission report, we believe that it is an appropriate time for the government to undertake a complete, meaningful revision of the *School Act*.

The Commission recommends:

37. That the provincial government undertake, consonant with the consideration of the recommendations of this report, a complete revision of all sections of the School Act.
9. Framing a Mandate

In the first eight chapters of the report, we focussed our attention on two areas of discussion. We reviewed first the social context in which provincial schools now operate and in which youngsters learn; then we analyzed four principal elements foundational to all educational systems—the school curriculum, the character and organization of the teaching profession, the financial and accountability systems for schooling, and the structures for school governance and administration around which the system is organized.

In addressing the social context, we emphasized that much has changed in provincial schools and society—and in the world of the learner—since the publication of the previous Royal Commission report on education almost three decades ago. We attempted to identify these social and educational changes and to illustrate their meaning for schools now and as we look toward the future. In doing so, we realized, as others have before, the intimate links between schools and the society they serve. We learned, too, that schools cannot ignore the broad social forces surrounding them. For their own effectiveness as institutions, they must respond to their environment and find ways to adapt and accommodate to changing demands.

“How should schools respond to their environment and to the changing demands made upon them?” That is the question that lies at the heart of the report. We attempted, throughout our discussion and recommendations, to provide an answer.

In doing so, and in examining the four dimensions of schooling noted above, we became aware of the depth and complexity of issues in education today. We saw, for example, that, whatever the provincial school system represents, it is first a social system comprised of people of all ages—from kindergarten children to grandparents returning to school for evening classes. Within this social system, students, teachers, administrators, and elected representatives carry with them to the school each day certain dreams, certain goals, and certain values. The school is a place where thousands of human interactions take place in the course of any school day; it is a living organism that transcends the structural relationships represented on organizational charts. It is a place where people come in search of various services and where others try to provide such services—the ‘fit’ between what people need and what they receive speaks to the performance of the system and their level of satisfaction with it.

Within this broad social system, we saw, too, that there are natural and continuing points of tension. These are not simply the result of territorial or jurisdictional disputes about where zones of authority and responsibility begin and end, although British Columbia has had no shortage of such disputes in recent years. In essence, they have more to do with the competition among ideals and values that forever exists in any dynamic social system, and the influence of this competition on the development, delivery, and management of educational programs and services. Such competition, and the tension it produces, is not necessarily
dysfunctional. It reflects the vitality and diversity of a democratic culture in its expression, and represents a search for direction and equilibrium within the system itself.

Nevertheless, such tension, together with the presence of important social changes, may lead to some confusion about the purposes of schooling, the role of schools in society, and the scope of the school’s responsibilities, as it has done recently in British Columbia. Throughout many meetings and conversations with parents, community leaders, and school professionals, we listened, time and again, to calls for a school mandate or some statement defining educational purpose, direction, responsibility, and the nature of the school’s relationship with other social agencies. In the following pages, we attempt to respond to these calls on the basis of what the Commission has learned about the schools of British Columbia.

This report has outlined in various ways the portrait of the school system envisioned by the Commission. In the broadest sense, it is a system characterized by both ‘loose’ and ‘tight’ properties: ‘loose’ in the sense that greater differentiation, greater choice, greater diversity, and greater freedoms exist for all individuals within the system than at present; ‘tight’ in the sense that there is closer articulation and cooperation among the components of the system, that basic systems of monitoring and accountability are strengthened, that funding levels are indexed and predictable, that assignments of roles and responsibilities are better clarified and defined, that zones of authority and jurisdiction are more specifically delineated, and that more appropriate structures are in place for communication, control, and action. It is a system that seeks to free the great human resources found in and around schools from the weight of conflict and uncertainty. Yet, it is also a system that seeks to protect the public good through structures and processes designed to ensure that certain standards are maintained, certain skills and bodies of knowledge are learned, and certain protections are afforded youngsters, parents, teachers, school personnel, and the community in general.

Our recommendations, we trust, clearly embody the characteristics of such a system. For example, in the areas of curriculum and instruction, we have attempted to loosen the constraints of the existing system by enhancing: lifelong learning, local curriculum initiatives, interdisciplinary approaches to learning, integrated patterns of classroom grouping, the flexibility of admission requirements in the primary grades, the elective choices of students at the senior secondary level, and the range of high school programs that exist inside and outside schools. Likewise, in governance, administration, and other areas, we have sought to free the system in new ways by extending: parental and pupil choice in public and non-public sectors, individual school control in budgeting, rural access to educational opportunities and services, and the authority of Native peoples to control their own school affairs, to name but a few examples.
At the same time, however, we have attempted to tighten the system in other ways. For example, we have seen fit to recommend that a Grade 1–10 Common Curriculum be implemented and that the goals of schooling be defined in educational terms. The system, as we see it, would incorporate these further changes: financial support is indexed to the economy; all youngsters are given entitlement to 12 years of schooling; non-educational agencies are held strictly accountable for the provision of social services; educational opportunities are equalized wherever possible; gender inequities are corrected; governance and administrative relationships are clarified and defined in more specific terms; roles and responsibilities pertaining to all actors and participants inside and outside the system are more narrowly delineated; and monitoring and evaluation systems for reporting financial and student performance data are improved.

In recommending loose and tight properties for the system, we seek to create an educational climate in which freedom exists within structure, in which the system's need for conformity and standardization is balanced by no less important needs for diversity and individualization; such a climate will enable objectives, standards, and responsibilities to be cinched down, wherever necessary, without depressing the efforts of parents, pupils, teachers, or school officials to develop new strategies for success or to make the system more responsive to those it serves. Within such a climate, we believe, individual initiative can flourish and be rewarded. That climate, too, we trust, will promote the overall stability of the system, yet allow for greater flexibility in meeting diverse needs and changing environmental demands.

Within the framework of this loose and tight system, we offer an outline of the mandate that we believe is now required. What follows here, in summary terms, is what we see to be the principal elements or components of a mandate statements. We limit our remarks to summary form for two reasons. First, we believe that our entire report in many ways speaks comprehensively to the question of mandate and should not be distilled too readily. Second, we believe that responsibility for the development of a mandate statement rests ultimately with the Minister of Education and that ministry of government; the definitive statement should be developed under such leadership and in close consultation with the major organizations in provincial schooling. The full report of this Royal Commission, together with other recent studies, provides a sufficient basis from which to launch such an initiative and, in the process of doing so, help bring together an educational system too long at odds with itself.

Having said this, let us suggest some elements which should constitute the foundations of a mandate statement. First, at the core of any mandate statement there must be a statement of goals. Despite notions to the contrary, the Commission believes this statement of goals is not difficult to derive. In fact, the intellectual, vocational, social, and individual purposes of education we emphasize throughout the report have provided the foundations for educational endeavour for more than 2,000
A mandate statement should include an explicit understanding about financial support.

years; we believe those foundations remain as durable and useful today as they were at the beginning of the Classical Age. Regardless of fad or fashion, the stated goals should continue to guide our educational activity at every level of schooling.

For practical purposes, a mandate statement should also make explicit the scope of the school’s responsibilities. Throughout the report, we carefully define these responsibilities in educational terms and strongly caution educators not to assume social responsibilities that more properly accrue to other helping agencies of government. We have deliberately defined the purposes of schools in this way to prevent the diffusion of energies and focus that has come to mark the provincial educational system over the past decade or so. We do acknowledge, however, that schools, by their very nature, will remain providers of custodial services for society and will continue their work in socializing children.

Similarly, we believe, a mandate statement should clarify the roles and relationships of the principal participants and actors in provincial schooling, both in terms of educational practice and law. This clarification should define the rights, privileges, duties, and responsibilities of pupils, parents, teachers, administrators, and governance officials at provincial and local levels, as well as major organizations within the educational community. It should also specify in such terms the relationship of non-educational agencies and organizations to the school system. Moreover, in view of the uncertainty that has come to surround aspects of governance and administration in recent years, we believe that special attention should be paid toward clarifying the roles and responsibilities of the Ministry of Education and the provincial government, as well as the roles and responsibilities of local school boards and local schools.

For purposes of focus, a mandate statement should also make explicit the nature and sequence of the curriculum to be followed at elementary and secondary levels, the learning outcomes generally desired at such levels, the division of responsibility for curriculum development and implementation, the classroom groupings favoured and permitted, and the nature, kind, and value of student assessment procedures.

A mandate statement should further include, we maintain, an explicit understanding about the level of financial support the system will be provided over an extended period of time, in terms of both operating and capital funding. Without the clear dissemination of financial guidelines which specify the limits, uses, and sources of funding, neither the public nor the professionals who serve them can systematically develop the processes, plans, and other mechanisms required to achieve the system’s goals.

In addition, we believe, a statement of mandate should also define for specific periods of time any special goals the system seeks to pursue. These might, for example, include such goals as promoting greater educational opportunities in rural areas, introducing new technologies into education, correcting gender inequities in administrative hiring practices, or expanding choice within secondary school programs. If these goals are to be addressed for a specific period and receive special
attention, funding, or treatment, the mandate statement should be revised so that it reflects the current emphases, strategies, and priorities of government.

A statement of mandate should likewise specify in some way who assumes responsibility for leadership, change, and the renewal of the system. As long as British Columbia schooling continues to be shaped by geography and regional differences, the system as a whole will require leadership at the provincial level. In saying this, we assume that, regardless of whatever authority may be granted to local districts in the future, schooling will require direction in several respects at the system-wide level, including overall planning, articulation of various parts within the educational system, the coordination of human and material resources, the organization of delivery of resources, policy and legislative initiatives, setting of budgets, and monitoring the system through accounting and evaluation mechanisms. The administration of the entire system, the Commission further assumes, requires more than technical mastery of its various functions. It requires stable, visible leadership that, when informed and guided by consultation with others in the educational community, will animate the system and assist it in responding to the new challenges time and circumstance will bring. A system of this size and complexity, therefore, depends in many ways on the perspective and cohesion that only a central educational agency such as the Ministry of Education can provide.

This is not to suggest that responsibility for leadership, change, and the renewal of the system is the exclusive domain of the central authority. Given the need for system-wide co-ordination, it is essential that school districts and schools work collaboratively with the Ministry of Education to build the structures and processes necessary to guide and revitalize the system. Here, too, it should be noted that school districts and individual schools are situated in such a way that they relate more directly to pupils, parents, and teachers than any senior level of government. Within this context, they can provide visionary leadership that reflects local needs and priorities, systems that support implementation of appropriate change in accordance with local expectations and resources, and efforts at renewal that encourages program development and personal growth in the local community and its schools.

Finally, for the sake of clarity and to remove some of the uncertainty that has troubled the governance and administration of the system in recent years, the Commission envisions the expression of the foregoing elements (and others as required) in a formal statement by the Minister of Education. This statement could serve the system well as a point of reference, particularly if the elements of the mandate were themselves referenced clearly to provisions within the School Act, or Ministry of Education policy and administrative handbooks. Ideally, this statement of mandate would be published and widely circulated, and be available in every school district office and school throughout the province, where it should be supplemented by district statements reflecting local policies, needs, and priorities.
The Commission has sought to draw attention to the importance of schooling as a vital provincial resource, the importance of the youngsters who attend British Columbia schools, the importance of the teachers who work with them daily, and the importance of parents, community members, and the various organizations who together shape the character of schooling we enjoy. We have tried to define a better educational future for all of them—a future marked by opportunities for greater choice, access, flexibility, cooperation, and responsibility—a future that we hope is both achievable and fair.

We realize that the Commission’s efforts to identify critical problems in provincial education, and to outline recommendations for change, are but small steps in a larger and more instrumental process. The truly difficult task is the one that the Commission bequeaths to school governance officials at provincial and local levels, to school staffs and their communities, and to the representatives of professional and other educational organizations. For it is they who must work together cooperatively to develop the structures, processes, and avenues of communication that will allow for the discussion and resolution of competing democratic ideals and values.

It is they who must encourage and assist public participation in educational matters, public expression of positions, and public debate on the salient school issues and choices of our time. It is to these elected and appointed individuals, and to the organizations and youngsters they serve, that falls the heavy burden of leadership in establishing a forum for provincial discussion and action.

We know that our goals can be achieved through the creation of a climate of trust and good faith, and a new awareness that special interests must be balanced against the need for consensus and compromise in the interest of the greater public good. In a province long noted for its political fractiousness, this is a task of no small order. In fact, there is, perhaps, no greater challenge facing the educational community in British Columbia as we approach the end of the twentieth century. If we achieve this, we may well leave a legacy of real value to learners.