Preface

The government announced the Education Equality Task Force in its Speech from the Throne on May 9, 2002. I was appointed to review the province’s student-focused funding formula and to make recommendations on ways to improve equity, fairness, certainty, and stability in the funding of Ontario’s students and schools.

Since my appointment, I have considered this review an opportunity to affirm and strengthen Ontario’s publicly supported education system by advancing its goal – continuous improvement in student learning and achievement. Since the funding formula is one of the instruments for advancing this goal, my report focuses on improving the formula so that it provides school boards and schools with the means to achieve our education objectives.

The journey from my appointment in May to the publication of this report has been a rewarding and enlightening one for me. More than anything, I have been impressed by the intense desire for high-quality public education among all education stakeholders in Ontario’s widely varied communities.

I have not made this journey alone. My understanding of public education and its goals has been greatly enhanced by conversations with, and by reading the work of, several important education “thinkers” and “practitioners,” including internationally respected researchers and former ministers and deputy ministers of education. I received thoughtful advice on the issues in my mandate from a panel of expert advisers, all of whom have a broad level of expertise acquired through long careers in Ontario’s education system, and from a Stakeholder Advisory Committee made up of representatives of Ontario’s major education stakeholders. Chapter 1 and Appendices A and B provide more information on these advisers.

I also received hundreds of oral and written submissions on a wide range of education and education funding issues from individuals, school boards, and education and other organizations during roundtable discussions and in public consultations throughout the province.

Since students are, after all, the focus of Ontario’s education funding formula and this report, I am grateful that I was able, while conducting public hearings around the province, to visit some of Ontario’s schools and to meet students and their teachers and principals.

The views of all of these people were most helpful as I deliberated the issues and wrote my report.
This report could not have been produced without the dedicated assistance of a key group of support staff and consultants:

• The task force’s highly efficient project co-ordinator, Norm Forma, quickly assembled a top-notch task force staff, engaged key consultants, arranged a wide-ranging consultation process in a very short period of time, responded quickly to all my needs, and kept me firmly on track.

• Enid Slack, an economic consultant with an impressive track record as a member of an Education Funding Review Panel in British Columbia and of David Crombie’s Who Does What Panel for the Ontario government, provided sensitive and practical advice on a wide range of issues.

• Ken Snowdon, who most recently served as Vice-President, Policy and Analysis, at the Council of Ontario Universities and who has years of experience with funding formulas, cost analyses, and research into higher education issues, conducted important research and advised me on many of the issues.

• Pat Tolmie, who has edited many education task force reports, including several for the Education Improvement Commission, offered valuable editorial advice and guidance in the crafting of this report.

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Finally, I would like to thank the Honourable Elizabeth Witmer, Minister of Education, for her support and for encouraging me to offer candid advice on ways to improve Ontario’s education funding formula.

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