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EDUCATION IS THE ANVIL
upon which democracy is forged.

So wrote Thomas Jefferson two centuries ago.

SINCE THERE IS LITTLE REASON TO BELIEVE OTHERWISE TODAY, AND GIVEN THE RECENT FOCUS ACROSS NORTH AMERICA ON THE WEIGHTY CHALLENGES FACING ALL LEVELS OF EDUCATION, WE DECIDED TO DEVOTE A SPECIAL EDITION OF *CANADIAN ISSUES* TO AN EXAMINATION OF THOSE CHALLENGES THROUGH SOME OF THE LEADING VOICES IN THE FIELD. IN THIS ISSUE, WE ATTEMPT TO ADDRESS PREVAILING CONCERNS ACROSS THE SPECTRUM — FROM THE GRADE SCHOOL CLASSROOM TO THE PRESIDENTIAL OFFICES OF OUR TOP UNIVERSITIES. IN BETWEEN WE SHARE THE PASSION AND WORDS OF TEACHERS, STUDENTS, RESEARCHERS, ACADEMICS, GOVERNMENT LEADERS AND COMMUNITY ACTIVISTS.

Though the educational debate was overshadowed to some degree by health care and other issues in last fall's federal election, it continues to rank extremely high in importance in the minds of Canadians from one end of the country to the other. With this in mind, we did our best to solicit contributions from all parts of the country. In securing opinions from Pugwash, Nova Scotia to Brandon, Manitoba to Vancouver, British Columbia, we succeeded in this pursuit and thus set a standard for future issues. And while education may be a provincial domain, with strong local influences, it nevertheless maintains a regional and national focus.

It is therefore appropriate that we begin our analysis with Dr. Paul Cappon, Director General of the Council of Ministers of Education. Dr. Cappon discusses the apparent renewed interest Canadians have towards educational issues and highlights the ways in which education has played an important role in Canada's historical development. He then offers a few suggestions on how education in Canada can be enhanced, while concluding that the time is right for a national dialogue on this critical issue. Our other contributors then bravely dive into all manner of controversies — from privatization and funding to student debt and emotional intelligence, through it all searching for the best formula for giving Canada's youth the strongest possible education in the years ahead.

Since education is a universal pursuit, and because our debates on the issue seem to be intersecting more and more, we also thought it would be interesting to seek out the view from our neighbours to the south. We are delighted that Richard Riley, the highly praised past US Secretary of Education, offers his perspective on the educational legacy of the Clinton years. When you notice his reference to Pierre Trudeau, you'll see that this contribution is a rare exclusive. We are equally grateful that Myron Lieberman and Graham Spanier took the time to offer their thoughts.

The growing conservative influence on education is no longer confined to our American friends. We therefore thought it would be useful to include two opinions about the heated 'school choice' debate which is being waged across the US as we go to press. Jerry Ellig and Ralph Neas generously give us their starkly differing views on who benefits and who loses with choice. It will be fascinating to watch this debate in action as George W. Bush takes priority one — his education package — to Congress.

This special edition of *Canadian Issues* marks a new beginning for the publishing arm of the Association for Canadian Studies. We have made significant improvements in style and content to better inform the Canadian public about the issues that most affect them. As always, we welcome your comments.