

# Urgent need to help Black kids

By LINCOLN DEPRADINE

The Royal Commission on Learning, which has just submitted its final report to the Ontario Government, has recommended that action be taken to increase the academic achievements of children of African heritage.

"We want special programs focused on Black students," said North York school superintendent Dr. Avis Glaze, who was a member of the Commission. "We are concerned.

"A lot of results are showing that [Black students] are not doing well, and we want some focus on them, because time is running out for those kids."

In recommendation 141, the five-member Commission suggests "that in jurisdictions with large numbers of Black students" there should be collaboration between school boards, academic authorities, faculties of education and representatives of the Black community "to establish demonstration schools and innovative programs, based on best

practices in bringing about academic success for Black students."

Glaze said that convincing evidence exists to support the need for the implementation of the recommendation.

"The data is very clear, and studies done by many school boards have shown that our Black children are not doing well," she said. "Very often they are at the bottom of the ladder.

"We have to use that data as a basis for decision-making about how we can begin to better educate those children for success."

Glaze said that implicit in the recommendation is the need to examine instances — inside or outside Canada — where there have been successful practices in educating Black Children "and try to replicate some of those characteristics."

For the past few years, Dr. Patricia Daenzer — an educator at the School of Social Work at McMaster University in Hamilton — has been in the forefront of calls for an alternative learning arrangement to help Black kids.

She says that she welcomes the Royal Commission's recommendation 141.

"I think they tried to balance interests, and I think those interests have been balanced in favour of those of us who

wanted to have an alternative form of educational arrangement for Black students," Daenzer said. "They have given us a framework.

"It's going to be up to the Black community to take this forward, and make the establishment of special schools — based on excellence for Black students — a reality."

Daenzer, who submitted two background research papers to the Commission, and an oral presentation, has suggested that the next stage should be the setting up of a working group to educate parents about the alternative learning program and its benefits, and to present the Ministry of Education with a plan and a timeframe.

"Until we have curricula



AVIS GLAZE

content that is meaningful in its ability to include the total agenda, until we have schools with teachers and principals that are trained in equity issues — until we have social relations that are predicated upon

mutual respect — we need to rescue some Black kids," Daenzer added.

Historian Dr. Sheldon Taylor said he also likes the recommendation and is supportive of it.

He says that he feels confident the government will respond positively to the recommendation and will move to implement it.

Educator Vernon Farrell, the principal of Brookview Middle School, criticized the recommendation for being too broad, and for not being specific enough in addressing the educational needs of Black students.

"We would have been more empowered — political wisdom notwithstanding

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