



Freethought Association of Canada

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The Freethought Association of Canada (FAC), a national alliance of secularist students groups in Canadian Universities, strongly supports the mandate of the One School System Network (OSSN) in working towards the establishment of a single, secular publicly funded school system in the province of Ontario.

The perpetuation of the current discriminatory, segregated school system is a stain on Canada's reputation as a leader in the area of human rights. The United Nations has twice (in 1999 and 2005) deemed the public funding of Catholic schools as a human rights violation and called on Canada "to eliminate discrimination on the basis of religion in funding public schools." The province's refusal to do so violates the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to which Canada affirmed its commitment in May 1976. For Canada to push for progressive policies which eliminate religious discrimination elsewhere in the world, while maintaining a defunct and antiquated separate school system would be tantamount to hypocrisy.

Furthermore, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms as part of the Canadian Constitution Act of 1982 has precedence over all other legislation, including Section 93(1) of the 1867 Constitution, in order to ensure that discrimination cannot be legalized. This is in addition to the fact that Sections 93(3) and 93(4) make it clear that the privileges to a minority religious group are not irrevocable at a future time. The ability of Newfoundland and Quebec to eliminate public funding of religious schools is an empirical demonstration of the possibility of ending the current discrimination.

Ontarian society would not tolerate the division of our universities according to the lines of race or religion. A school system in which virtually all children are of Catholic background and all teachers must profess their adherence to the Catholic faith (which also permits school boards to bar homosexuals from teaching) insulates children from the realities of Canada's multicultural society that they will inevitably encounter in the work place or in post-secondary education. Nor is the funding of 'all' religious schools a viable option. Aside from questions of economic feasibility, since this encourages the interference of the government in the private sphere of religion in deeming what beliefs deserve funding and while also discriminate against those lacking a religion to which such a privilege is not granted. In addition, encouraging the division of our children according to religious line will only breed alienation and mistrust between communities. In 2005 the Ontario government conceded to the call for one law for all Ontarians. On the same principles of justice and equality, the FAC calls for the amalgamation of the current publicly funded school system in to one secular public education system for all Ontario's children.

The Freethought Association of Canada is a member of the One School System Network
www.onessn.org
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