

Statement by Dr. Kevin Saldanha, vice-president of the Halton-Peel Humanist Community on behalf of the Secular Humanist Coalition for a Unified Public School System.

My name is Kevin Saldanha and on behalf of the Secular Humanists of Ontario, we strongly feel that the proposal made by John Tory to extend public funding to ALL religious schools in Ontario is irresponsible. We are against the public funding of ANY religious indoctrination that interferes with the proper education of our future citizens. We are also opposed to the interference of religion in other aspects of public service such as government and healthcare.

Faith is considered by many to be one of those essential threads of our social fabric and Ontario has no shortage of the rainbow that makes up that technicolour dreamcoat. Most of the recognized religions, Roman Catholicism being a prime example, propagate a doctrine that is in direct conflict with the ONLY unifying theory of how we arrived here and the diversity of life we see around us. That theory was established over one hundred and fifty years ago, elucidated by Darwin in several books and scientifically confirmed since then by many unrelated disciplines.

However, the proper teaching of evolutionary science in Catholic schools has been consistently suppressed to the detriment of the understanding of human nature, and our place on this planet, by a major segment of the population today. This knowledge is essential to making important decisions as to how we are to continue to live together in this multicultural society in Ontario as well as how we should protect our education and the environment for the future.

The public funding of ignorance can no longer be tolerated. John Tory's proposal to extend funding to faith-based schools as his way of bringing them under the control of the department of education in Ontario is flawed. Every school in Ontario, whether private or public, should follow the prescribed curriculum, adhere to standardized testing, employ credentialed teachers and not discriminate in its admission and hiring policies on the basis of religion. We already have a legacy of discrimination in the Catholic school boards. Instead of propagating that model to other religions let us do the right thing and eliminate discrimination and indoctrination from our publicly funded schools.