

## PUBLIC STATEMENT

MALCOLM BUCHANAN

CIVIL RIGHTS IN PUBLIC EDUCATION, INC.

MEMBER ORGANIZATION OF ONE SCHOOL SYSTEM NETWORK

JOHN TORY'S PROPOSAL TO PUBLICLY FUND ALL NON-CATHOLIC FAITH-BASED SCHOOLS OPENED UP A POLITICAL " CAN OF WORMS." IN AN ATTEMPT TO DIFFUSE THE CONTROVERSY OF HIS PARTY'S POLICY ON FATH-BASED SCHOOLS HE HAS ANNOUNCED THAT HE WOULD, IF ELECTED PREMIER, PUT THE ISSUE TO A FREE VOTE IN THE ONTARIO LEGISLATURE. BOTH WILL NOT OCCUR.

HOWEVER, THE CONSERVATIVE PROPOSAL TO FUND FAITH-BASED SCHOOLS EXPOSED DALTON MCGUINITY AND THE LIBERAL PARTY AS BEING HYPOCRITES. THE LIBERALS AND OTHER APOLOGISTS CONTINUE TO SUPPORT PUBLIC FUNDING OF ONTARIO'S ROMAN CATHOLIC SEPARATE SCHOOLS. IT'S ALL RIGHT TO FUND CATHOLIC SCHOOLS BUT NOT THOSE OF ANY OTHER FAITH! THIS VIOLATES THE UNITED NATIONS RULING THAT ONTARIO SHOULD END THE SPECIAL PRIVILEGE CURRENTLY ACCORDED TO THE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY BY EITHER FUND ALL RELIGIOUS SCHOOLS OR NONE. NONE IS THE PREFERRED OPTION SUPPORTED BY THE MAJORITY OF ONTARIANS.

CIVIL RIGHTS IN PUBLIC EDUCATION [ CRIPE ], AS OUR NAME IMPLIES, AGREES WHOLE-HEARTEDLY WITH THE RECENTLY ANNOUNCED POSITION OF THE CANADIAN CIVIL LIBERTIES ASSOCIATION WITH REGARD TO THE PROVISION OF PUBLIC FUNDS FOR THE INDOCTRINATION OF RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AS IT APPLIES TO ONTARIO'S EDUCATION SYSTEM.

CIVIL RIGHTS IN PUBLIC EDUCATION SPECIFICALLY ENDORSES THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS CONTAINED IN THE CANADIAN CIVIL LIBERTIES SUBMISSION TO KATHLEEN WYNNE, MINISTER OF EDUCATION:

\* PUBLIC FUNDING OF RELIGIOUS SCHOOLS COULD WEAKEN THE PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM AND UNDERMINE ITS CONTRIBUTION TO THE VITALITY OF OUR DEMOCRACY.

\* HAVING OPENED ITS DOORS TO EVERYONE, REGARDLESS OF WEALTH, STATUS, RACE, RELIGION, AND ETHNICITY, THE PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM HAS PERFORMED AN INTEGRATIVE AND UNIFYING FUNCTION FOR ONTARIO SOCIETY.

\* OUR COMMUNITY MUST WORK TO SHORE UP OUR INTEGRATIVE INSTITUTIONS. ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT OF THESE IS THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

\* IF THE FUNDING PROPOSAL GOES AHEAD, PUBLIC SCHOOLS COULD LOSE SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF STUDENTS TO THE RELIGIOUS SCHOOLS. IF THIS WERE TO HAPPEN, THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS WOULD NO LONGER BE ABLE TO PERFORM THEIR INTEGRATIVE ROLE. IN TIME , OUR COMMUNITY COULD BECOME A MUCH LESS TOLERANT PLACE.

\* THE SHEAR COSTS OF FUNDING MANY RELIGIOUS SCHOOLS WOULD LIKELY REDUCE THE QUALITY OF THE ENTIRE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM.

\* CONTRARY TO THE ARGUMENTS OF SOME, THE CURRENT PUBLIC FUNDING OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS CANNOT JUSTIFY THE CRITICAL RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH THE PROPOSAL TO FUND MORE RELIGIOUS SCHOOLS.

CIVIL RIGHTS IN PUBLIC EDUCATION STRONGLY ENDORSES THE CIVIL LIBERTIES ASSOCIATION RECOMMENDATIONS:

[1] THERE SHOULD BE NO NEW PUBLIC FUNDING OF ANY RELIGIOUS SCHOOLS.

[2] A CONSTITUTIONAL AMMENDMENT SHOULD BE ENACTED TO TERMINATE THE PUBLIC FUNDING OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS.

THE REACTION FROM SUPPORTERS OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM TO THE CANADIAN CIVIL LIBERTIES ASSOCIATION'S RECOMMENDATIONS WERE PREDICTABLE. THE PRESIDENT OF THE ONTARIO CATHOLIC SCHOOL TRUSTEES' ASSOCIATION EXPRESSED "DEEP DISMAY" AND IS QUOTED AS SAYING THAT "ANY ATTEMPT TO REMOVE PUBLIC FUNDING FOR CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WOULD BE EXTREMELY DIVISIVE AND WOULD BE VIGOROUSLY OPPOSED BY THE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY AND INDEED ALL RESPONSIBLE CITIZENS." THESE ARE HOLLOW THREATS SINCE A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF CATHOLICS SUPPORT A SINGLE PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM.

DURING THE RECENT DEBATE ABOUT THE PROPOSAL TO PROVIDE FULL PUBLIC FUNDING FOR THE SCHOOLS OF ALL FAITH COMMUNITIES, IT HAS COME TO LIGHT AGAIN, AS CRIFE DETERMINED IN THE LATE 1990'S, THAT AN OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF ONTARIO CITIZENS PREFER ONE SECULAR PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM. PERIOD. POLLS INDICATE THAT NEARLY 60% OF THOSE POLLED WANT ONE PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM.

WE PRIDE OURSELVES AS LIVING IN A DEMOCRACY, " A SOCIAL CONDITION OF CLASSLESSNESS AND EQUALITY " BUT WE STILL FIND OUSELVES WITH POLITICAL PARTIES WHICH PREFER TO DIVIDE ONTARIO SOCIETY INTO A PRIVILEGED CLASS AND A SUBSERVIENT CLASS, BASED ON RELIGION. IN DOING SO, THEY BLATANTLY IGNORE THE WILL OF THE VAST MAJORITY OF ONTARIO CITIZENS WITH REGARD TO THE MANNER IN WHICH WE PREFER TO HAVE OUR EDUCATIONAL SERVICES DELIVERED.

IT IS TIME FOR ONTARIO'S POLITICAL PARTY LEADERS TO COME FORWARD AND RESOLVE THE DIVISIVE ISSUE OF FUNDING RELIGIOUS-BASED SCHOOLS BY ADVOCATING AND SUPPORTING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SINGLE, SECULAR, PUBLICLY FUNDED SCHOOL SYSTEM FOR THE PROVINCE OF ONTARIO. ONTARIO IS BECOMING AN INCREASINGLY DIVERSE SOCIETY, AND THE DAY IS RAPIDLY COMING WHEN THE STATUS QUO WILL NO LONGER BE WORKABLE NOR ACCEPTABLE. PARENTS WANT A SCHOOL SYSTEM THAT IS INCLUSIVE; A SCHOOL SYSTEM THAT WILL WELCOME ALL STUDENTS WHATEVER THEIR BELIEFS, AND PREPARE THEIR CHILDREN TO PARTICIPATE IN A SECULAR AND MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY.

IN VIEW OF THE FACT THAT THE ROMAN CATHOLIC COMMUNITY IN ONTARIO IS NO LONGER A THREATENED MINORITY, THE DISCRIMINATORY ASPECTS OF THE FUNDING COME TO THE FORE, NO LONGER HIDDEN OR ACCEPTED AS THE PRICE TO PAY FOR AN OUTDATED 1867 BARGAIN. THE CALL NOW IS TO INTEGRATE THE ROMAN CATHOLIC COMMUNITY INTO THE PUBLIC SYSTEM WHERE ALL CITIZENS ARE ACCEPTED WITH RESPECT AND EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY.