

Thunder Bay Chronicle – Journal

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In response to Father Ted Kennedy (Fold public schools into separate, Oct 11/07):

Firstly it is in fact arguable whether the Catholic schools truly do surpass the standards of academics and discipline of the public schools. There is actually much variation across the province and in some areas the reverse is true. Also consider that the public system takes in all students □ it is against human rights for the public system to turn anyone away because of religious affiliation but not so with the favoured Catholic system.

The status quo has come about through a long history which originally had relevance, the purpose being to protect the smaller and more vulnerable Catholic population in an era when all schools were religious. Obviously that setting no longer exists, in fact Catholics now are in a unique and elevated position which we all pay for.

As for the United Nations, Canada has accepted, signed and pledged to abide by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. After an exhaustive legal process which involved extensive research and documentation about the situation in Ontario, two separate cases resulted in two rulings which found Canada in violation of basic human rights because of public funding of education for Catholics only.

Although the situation certainly could not be considered as extreme, the parallel between the discrimination here in Ontario

and that in the southern United States during and before the 1960s is striking. I'm sure that many white folks down there thought the status quo was comfortable and right.

The "friendly coexistence" between the present two systems has been tolerated despite the fact that about 70% of the population favours one public system because people generally have thought there was no way to bring about the changes required. But the change can be made with a simple agreement between the Ontario and Federal Parliaments (as Quebec and Newfoundland did). The benefits would be immense. Kids could go together to the closest school. Fewer area schools would have to close. Savings in administration and duplication has been conservatively estimated at \$500 million per year. All students, all staff, would be considered equal, discrimination eliminated. Canada could resume its place as a world leader in human rights.

Consider this: we are all paying for Catholic religious education (the same percentage of each of our taxes goes to the Catholic system regardless of which system we designate). Yet Catholic schools can pick and choose who they will allow to attend. And when your son or daughter graduates with a teaching degree and is looking for a job, if he or she is not Catholic, their job opportunities are immediately reduced by about 50%! In what other public sector job could an employer ask "Are you Catholic?" and turn you away if you were not???

Brian Nieminen