

## **McGuinty ignores facts of education**

**Editorial**    Sudbury Star    September 18, 2007

It is not apathy that keeps voters away from the polls in an election. It is the hypocrisy of the politicians.

A case in point: Ontario Liberal leader Dalton McGuinty is using this election to define himself as the sole defender of a "publicly funded, publicly delivered" education system.

He has used the term over and over again in his campaign stops. He is fond of saying, there is no better system than Ontario's "publicly funded, publicly delivered" education system.

And he goes to great pains to point out that the multi-faith based education system being proposed by Progressive Conservative leader John Tory would do irreparable harm to Ontario's "publicly funded, publicly delivered" education system.

What the premier fails to acknowledge is that Ontario's education system is not entirely public.

At present there are two education systems in this province - one for Catholics and one for all others.

If McGuinty truly believes that the best system is in fact a "publicly funded, publicly delivered" education system, then he must declare what he is going to do about funding for Catholic schools.

He was asked that question during a campaign stop in this city last week and managed to skirt around it saying essentially that he inherited the Catholic system and, in essence, he wasn't about to change it.

"Public education, as you and I have inherited it, is as it is today. The responsibility of the premier of the day is to champion public education as he or she finds it," he told the media.

So, his "publicly funded, publicly delivered" education system, with no segregation of students, as he's fond of saying, is no such thing.

It is interesting to note that while McGuinty continues to trumpet his "publicly funded, public publicly delivered" education system, his own education was within the Catholic school system.

It is true that funding for the Catholic system goes back to the British North America Act. But that is no excuse for McGuinty to simply ignore what everyone can see: that the Catholic system gets funding while all other religions don't.

Like all things created by politicians, the system can be modified, altered or amended, if there is the political will to do so.

McGuinty doesn't have the political will.

He would rather tell people he favours a "publicly funded, publicly delivered," education system than actually do something about creating a true version of such an education system.

If he is concerned about alienating Catholic voters, he should keep in mind that a great many parents who enrolled their children in the Catholic system did so for reasons other than religion, such as the Catholic school being closer to home, or the Catholic system in their area having better facilities and so on.

As well, it's been estimated that as many as 25 per cent of the students enrolled in the Catholic system are not Catholic.

If McGuinty truly wants to have a "publicly funded, publicly delivered" education system, it's time he demonstrates that, otherwise his assertions are just so much hypercritical political hot air.