

Ancaster News

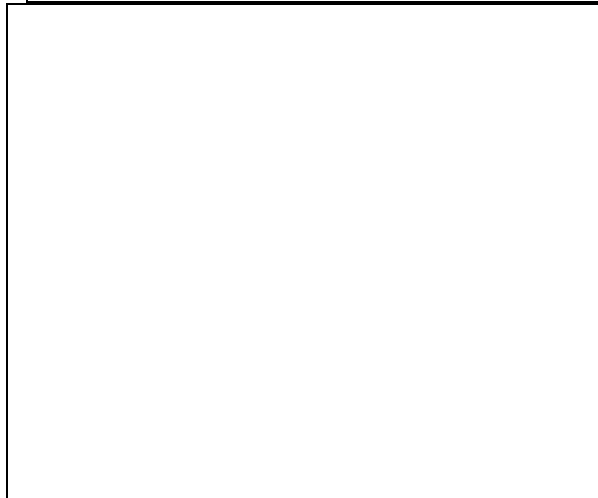
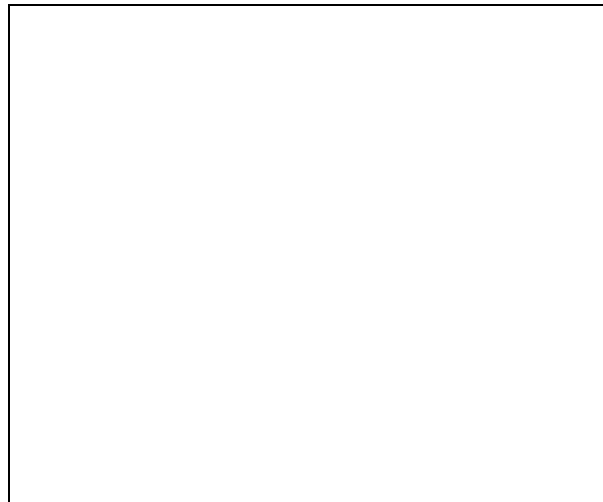
Local Catholic School board promotes segregation

(Sep 7, 2007)

Re: Education conundrum, Aug 31/07

Your August 31 editorial steers into inaccuracies virtually right from the get-go. First, the Catholic separate system is not open to all, and second, facts bear out that it promotes more segregation than you seem willing to admit.

The Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board revealed for a newspaper article last year (*A lesson in diversity, Hamilton Spectator, May 5, 2006*) that only seven per cent of their student population was non-Catholic - a figure certainly skewed towards their secondary schools, where they cannot discriminate. That represents a pretty poor correlation to the 66 per cent of Ontarians who are non-Catholic. Census data also shows that of the



dozen or so visible minority groups tracked by Statistics Canada in the census, only two are more likely to be Catholic than non-Catholic (Latin Americans and Filipinos). Taken together, these facts suggest that Catholic separate schools - particularly elementary schools - are nowhere near as diverse as their public counterparts.

I have to agree with you that if Ontario is to fund religious schools at all (and I am not promoting that), it must be through a modest tax credit that applies to all faiths equally - including Catholics. The corollary of bringing all religious schools into the public system (as the Tories now propose) is that government would become the arbiter of which faiths are valid and where they have sufficient numbers to warrant support (a test that does not apply to Catholics). That is going where governments ought not to tread. Tax credits provide the only way to fund religious schools in a manner that preserves government religious neutrality; that being at arm's length. For the Ontario government to be religiously neutral, however, it first needs to roll the Catholic school system into a single public school system equally accessible to all.

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Ottawa