

# Fostering a More Tolerant Society

## *A joint statement against the funding of religious schools*

*September 21, 2007*

CANADIAN  
CIVIL LIBERTIES  
ASSOCIATION



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CANADIENNE DES  
LIBERTES CIVILES

Ontario's schools are among the most diverse, tolerant and respectful of any schools in the world. Our public schools bring children together, regardless of wealth, status, race, religion, and ethnicity. Our public schools bring communities together.

**In the Ontario election, a proposal has been put forward to publicly fund faith-based schools. The Canadian Civil Liberties Association (CCLA) and the undersigned call upon all political parties to reject the proposal to fund religious schools, and to work to strengthen our public education system and to ensure that it continues to reflect the diversity of our communities.**

Public funding of religious schools will drain resources from the public system and promote private schools at the expense of public schools. It will fragment and divide our system along religious lines. The sheer costs of funding many religious schools would likely reduce the quality of the entire educational system.

If the funding proposal goes ahead, public schools could lose significant numbers of students to religious schools. If this were to happen, the public schools could no longer hope to perform their role in bringing people together. In time, our community could become a much less tolerant place.

Our public education system strives to acknowledge, accommodate and celebrate the diversity of faiths in our multicultural society. Our public schools have shown flexibility and creativity in responding to the changing face of our communities, while playing a vital role in integrating many cultures.

We call on political parties and candidates to affirm their commitment to building a strong public education system, and to reject the proposal to fund private religious schools. Together, let's continue to build a public education system that is responsive to the needs of all faiths, cultures and communities, and makes Ontario an example of social tolerance and harmony.

*The following individuals, all Ontario residents, have endorsed this statement on their own behalf. They do not speak for their affiliated organizations, which are listed for identification purposes only.*

**Frank Addario**, criminal lawyer;  
**Greg Albo**, Professor, York University;  
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**Irene Atkinson**, Trustee and former Chair, Toronto District School Board;  
**Sahar Badawy**, President of Flemington Park Parent Assn.;  
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**Jamie Cameron**, Professor and Editor in Chief, Osgoode Hall Law Journal;  
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**Michael Cochrane**, author;  
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**David Cronenberg**, filmmaker;  
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**Michael DePencier**, publisher;  
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**Patricia Jackson**, former Counsel, Arbour Commission on the Penitentiary for Women;  
**Doug Joliffe**, President, OSSTF District 12;  
**Joy Kogawa**, author of award-winning novel on Japanese-Canadian internment;

**Saul Laskin**, former mayor, City of Thunder Bay;  
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**Dr. Joseph Wong**, founding President, Chinese-Canadian National Council.

NOTE: Parts of this statement are derived from a current brief to the Government of Ontario by the Canadian Civil Liberties Association.

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