

**ONTARIO NEEDS...**

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### What you need to know about the religious school funding issue...

- The Progressive Conservative (PC) plan to extend **full public funding to non-Catholic religious schools** would compound the duplication penalty already borne by the taxpayer in funding four overlapping school systems. It would leave **less funding available** for classrooms, programs, facilities, and children with special needs. It would mean **more split classes, longer average bus commutes, and more students being bussed past their nearest school to attend another one.**
- In proposing to add new types of religious schools to the public school system, the PC plan would force government to decide what constitutes a faith and which faiths deserve public funding. **These are decisions that no government should make.**
- By removing tuition as a barrier to religious school attendance, that attendance would grow, leading to the **increased segregation of Ontario children.** Tolerance and mutual respect are best taught through shared experiences, not through a textbook or a lecture. A sense of common citizenry is built by regular and meaningful interaction with our neighbours, not through segregation and isolation.

- One third of Ontario's publicly funded teaching positions, those in the separate system, are closed to two thirds of the population, the non-Catholics. Under the PC plan, **more publicly funded teaching positions would become closed to those who are not members of a government recognized faith.**
- Seven of ten Canadian provinces have a single public school system. Of the five that provide some public funding for non-Catholic religious schools, only Alberta provides the same full funding that the Ontario PCs are proposing. **Alberta has the most expensive education system in Canada** on both a per capita and a per pupil basis.
- **Religious schools tend to be far less diverse than the population as a whole.** The Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board, for example, is 7% non-Catholic (2006). That compares poorly to the 66% of Ontarians who are non-Catholic. Other religious schools would be similarly non-reflective of our society.
- In completely ignoring non-religious private schools, the PC plan would create a new type of discrimination against the families using those schools. Will this inequity be addressed by the PCs after the election? Will the courts order them to address it?

The UN Human Rights Committee has **twice** censured Canada (1999, 2005) for violating the equality rights of its own citizens by virtue of the discrimination against non-Catholics in the Ontario school system. The Committee indicated that in order to live up to our human rights obligations, we must fund all religious schools equally or **fund none.**

Opinion polls have consistently indicated that **most Ontarians favour a single public school system for each official language.**

**A constitutional amendment rescinding Catholic school rights can be achieved quickly through a simple bilateral agreement with Ottawa alone.** Both Quebec and Newfoundland secured such amendments in the 1990s, before eliminating religious school boards.

The Green party has pledged to eliminate public funding for religious schools and to create a single public school system for each official language.

The Liberal and NDP parties share our concerns over the costly and divisive nature of the PC plan, but they fail to acknowledge (at the time of writing) that publicly funded Catholic schools raise the very same issues. They defend their inconsistency by appealing to history, but the constitutional "obligation" they cite in excusing Catholic school funding can quickly be removed or can even be ignored.

In failing to acknowledge the discrimination in our present school system and to provide a remedy, both the Liberals and the NDP show a callous disregard for the fundamental equality rights of all non-Catholic Ontarians.

Contact your PC candidate to let him or her know that you oppose their education plan. Contact your Liberal and NDP candidates and demand that they offer a **consistent, principled, and fiscally responsible** alternative to the PC plan -- one school system for each official language.

**On October 10<sup>th</sup>,  
Stand up for inclusive public education.**



Education Equality in Ontario

Member,  
One School System Network  
[www.OneSSN.org](http://www.OneSSN.org)