

October 3, 2007

Your Catholic school system... a strong, healthy and integral part
of Ontario's education system

Dear Parents, Guardians and Friends of Catholic Education:

Your school is part of one of four components of Ontario's strong and healthy publicly funded school system. Your school and school board belong to the English Catholic component, while the others include the French Catholic, and the English and French public boards. From time to time, throughout our 160-year history of Catholic Education in Ontario, opponents to our system have emerged to challenge our right to provide Catholic Education and to call for the elimination of public funding for denominational Catholic schools in favour of one publicly funded secular system.

In recent months, we have again seen the limited emergence of these advocates, calling once again for the elimination of Catholic schools. This campaign has received media attention in some parts of the province.

Catholic schools are an integral part of the foundation of Ontario, educating over one-third of all students in kindergarten to grade 12. That is more than 670,000 students. Over a million parents choose Catholic education for their children. That choice is supported by 2.4 million Catholic ratepayers and voters and is funded through property income, sales and other taxes paid by the Ontario community.

The history of Catholic Education in our region dates back prior to Confederation. From that perspective, Dufferin-Peel, and its predecessor Catholic school boards, has provided Catholic Education in one form or another on a continuous basis for a longer period than this province or country has even existed. In fact, Catholic Education, and the provision for its existence, was an article and part of the discussions of Confederation.

Our Catholic schools have a history of academic excellence. We are a very successful part of publicly funded education in Ontario and not a costly duplicate, as some have suggested. Our schools and school boards consistently meet and exceed provincial expectations in student achievement, program delivery, class size, and moral character development.

One of the arguments put forward by those advocating the elimination of Catholic schools and school boards is that amalgamation into one secular school system will save money. **They are wrong.** Amalgamation simply cannot lower costs in all areas. Ontario has already been through a major amalgamation of schools boards in 1998 and most available economies of scale have already been realized. Indeed, some of the boards that have been forced into amalgamation have actually seen cost levels increase. Experience also indicates that amalgamation is not necessarily better. As new entities become larger, they often become more remote and less accessible to the people they are supposed to serve. What we do know is that Catholic school boards and public school boards already save taxpayers millions of dollars annually through a variety of successful joint partnerships in such areas as co-operative school financing, purchasing, transportation, energy management and other services.

Catholic Education is rooted in the gospel of Jesus Christ, which promotes discipleship, community and the dignity of persons in social justice. Gospel values, which are integral to every aspect of the Catholic school, create a system that is distinctively different from a secular system.

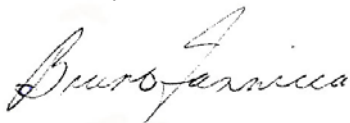
Catholic schools enjoy publicly stated, unqualified support of our government and all major opposition parties in the legislature. We have been assured by the Liberal government and by statements made publicly by Premier Dalton McGuinty and Minister of Education, Kathleen Wynne, that there is no plan to change the present system. Both Mr. Tory and Mr. Hampton have also indicated their support of publicly funded Catholic schools.

As the election comes upon us, we encourage you to make your concerns known to the candidates seeking your vote, that there will be no dilution of the rights of Catholic schools, that Catholic school boards currently exercise.

Our schools remain a strong integral component of Ontario's publicly funded school system. They are supported by a significant and vital infrastructure of Catholic organizations representing educators, clergy and parents.

Let us all do our part to ensure publicly funded Catholic schools continue to thrive in this community and in this province.

Sincerely,



Bruno Iannicca
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Director of Education

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