

Coalition for a Unified Public School System

Position Statement

The Secular Humanists of Ontario endorse a single, non-denominational administration for all publicly funded pre-university education in Ontario. We stand for the democratic separation of religion from politics at every level of government to ensure equality and fairness for all Ontarians. Therefore, we feel strongly that the public purse should not be used to fund religious instruction of any kind. Nor should public schools discriminate against students or teachers of varying or no religious backgrounds.

The vision would involve the dismantling of the Separate (Catholic) School Boards and the elimination of any plan to offer tax credits, coupons or special funding for private education. The attempts of militant groups to get public funding for their religious schools would be less successful if there was no disparity in funding schools based on religion in Ontario. Although not essential initially, this change would also require all publicly funded educational institutions in Ontario to be devoid of religious icons, imagery and subliminal messaging although there could be an accommodation made for privately funded religious instruction utilizing public facilities after regular school hours.

This initiative to end an overtly biased policy is supported by the international community and has been condemned by TWO United Nations rulings within the last decade. The public funding of Roman Catholicism implies governmental endorsement of the human rights violations being carried out in the name of religious instruction. It is our opinion that the indoctrination of young minds to a unique, antiquated worldview to the exclusion of all others, including secularism, is detrimental to their emotional and intellectual development. It creates intolerance and bigotry towards those who look different, have a different biological orientation and practice different faiths or no faith. It creates an elitist ghetto and reduces the chance of a healthy interaction between neighbours on the same street.

Reverting to one secular school system will also end the discriminatory hiring practices of the Separate School Board, which require all their teachers not only to be baptized Catholics but also be actively involved with the Church. Their private lives come under scrutiny and any perceived indiscretion, such as inconsistent fulfillment of Sunday obligations, can be considered valid grounds for dismissal even if it doesn't affect their ability to fulfill the requirements of their employment.

In this age of ecological awareness and conservation of our environment, the wastage of precious natural resources and contamination of the biosphere by duplication of services, including unnecessary publicly funded bus transportation, cannot be justified to maintain a practice that has been deemed completely unnecessary. The lame argument that these rights have been enshrined in the Constitution and assured by legislation enacted a century and a half ago is no longer valid. Separate school boards no longer protect a religious minority in Quebec and the demographics of Ontario cannot support public funding of one preferred faith. The divisions that we create in our education system will be solidified in our greater society.

The unification of the school boards in Ontario will be a fiscally positive move to improve the quality of the education of our future generations. It will give them the emotional and intellectual capabilities of making our great nation a world leader in upholding the ideals of the basic rights of all humans.