

Frankly Speaking



Frank Klees, MPP

Toward Inclusive Education

No issue has stirred more emotion than John Tory's proposal for an inclusive public education system. And no issue has been more misrepresented by those who oppose it.

The proposal is straightforward, fair and responsible. Bring the 53,000 students who are now attending independent faith-based schools into the public education system, where every school is required to comply with provincial standards for what they teach, teachers are required to meet provincial credentials and every student is measured by the same province-wide, standardized tests for academic achievement.

To bring all Ontario students under the same

system with the same public scrutiny and accountability, simply makes good sense.

The current situation can no longer be justified. Six provinces and territories (BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Quebec and NWT) have recognized the unfairness and potential risk of having a fragmented education system. The United Nations Human Rights Committee ruled in 1995 and again in 2005 that Ontario's policy of including Catholic schools while excluding other faith-based schools from the public system is "discriminatory and a violation of binding international law". Not only is it unfair, it is also not in the best interest of our society. The best thing we can do to ensure cohesion and avoid polarization is to have all schools functioning within the same system.

And I agree with John Tory that the creation of an inclusive public education system, with transparent and public accountability for all schools in the province, is worth the additional investment and should be seen as an investment in our future. The fact that the parents of these

children all contribute equally to the public education system through their taxes adds to the fairness factor of the issue.

Given these facts, is this proposed policy really the threat it's characterized to be, or is it in fact a policy of inclusion as John Tory sees it? I am confident that as people come to understand the facts of this issue and the intent and ultimate outcome of this proposal, they will recognize the leadership John Tory is demonstrating by taking a principled stand on this issue.

As always, I welcome your comments and views on this or any other issues of importance to you. Please visit my website at www.frankklees.com or call me personally at 416 509 8999.

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