

OECTA'S leadership TRAINING PROGRAM SPECIALIZED

Amalgamating Ontario's Public and Catholic Schools is a Bad Idea... for EVERYONE.

1. Amalgamation will not produce any significant savings.

- a. Experience from previous amalgamations shows that promised savings are not realized.
- b. In a study of municipal mergers, the right-wing Fraser Institute concluded that "the intended benefits never materialised. We are not the first to reach this conclusion."
- c. The Harris government's 1998 school board amalgamation cost almost \$1 billion.
- d. Education funding is per pupil. The same number of students = same amount of funding.
- e. Savings from amalgamation can only be realized if there are fewer students attending the publicly funded system.
- f. Public and Catholic boards already work together to achieve savings in areas such as transportation and purchasing. Some local boards even have shared facilities.

2. Amalgamation would cause upheaval for students, parents, and board employees.

- a. Some schools will be closed and school boundaries redrawn, requiring many students to change schools.
- b. The only way to achieve savings is by reducing the number of school board employees.
- c. Job losses would occur for teachers and educational workers from both systems, as seniority lists would be blended.
- d. Experience from 1998 shows that non-teacher job losses will be primarily support staff, not high-priced administrators.
- e. The current situation of school closures, which is due to shifts in enrolment, illustrates the difficulties and challenges for everyone involved.

3. Today's Catholic schools are effective, modern, and inclusive.

- a. Catholic schools are diverse and represent their communities.
- b. Many non-Catholic families send their children to Catholic schools.
- c. Ontario's publicly funded Catholic schools educate approximately one third of all students.
- d. In 2016, Catholic schools won more than half of the Premier's Awards for Accepting Schools.
- e. Catholic schools deliver the Ontario curriculum, including the newly revised Health and Physical Education curriculum.
- f. Catholic students are free to form their own Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs), something Catholic teachers have long supported.
- g. Catholic schools work – our graduation rates are 12 per cent higher than the public system.

4. **The Catholic community is united and opposed to amalgamation.**
 - a. There are 1,300 schools, with 80,000 employees, educating approximately 550,000 students, and supported by 2.24 million taxpayers.
 - b. The Catholic teachers, trustees, and clergy, work together to preserve the system. It may be the only thing that unites all three parties.
 - c. The Ontario situation is very different from both Quebec and Newfoundland.
 - d. An attempt to de-fund Catholic schools would result in a vigorous, expensive, and lengthy Constitutional challenge.

5. **Ontario's Catholic schools have a long and unique history.**
 - a. The first Catholic school opened in 1826.
 - b. The inclusion of funding into the 1867 BNA was the result of a historical compromise.
 - c. In 1984, Premier Bill Davis announced the government's intention to expand full funding to Grades 11, 12, and 13.
 - d. In 1985, the NDP supported the Peterson Liberal government's Bill 30, which established full funding.
 - e. Following a challenge by some teacher unions, Bill 30 was declared constitutional by the Canadian Supreme Court in 1987.

6. **Amalgamation doesn't address the serious issues in education today.**
 - a. In education, bigger isn't better. The largest school boards have experienced financial difficulties and have been placed under government supervision.
 - b. Education research is clear — decision-making is most effective when it is closely connected with teachers and the classroom experience.
 - c. Issues like special education, a review of the funding formula, mental health problems, and violence in the classroom are the real challenges in education that need to be addressed during the election.
 - d. An attempt at a forced amalgamation will divert time and money from these serious problems.

7. **Without consensus, a one school system policy could be politically divisive.**
 - a. The 2007 faith based school platform resulted in an election campaign that perpetuated myths and stereotypes and ultimately resulted in limited debate on other election issues.
 - b. If the NDP were to adopt such a contentious position, the media would seize upon it (as it did with faith based schools in 2007) and prevent the party from getting much-needed media attention on other important issues and areas of policy that it has been working hard to develop.
 - c. The 2010, ONDP Task Force on Education Funding concluded that, "The New Democrats oppose any efforts to forcibly amalgamate the school systems until it is demonstrated that there is consensus in the province..." *No such consensus has been reached.*

Look everywhere in Ontario society – every profession, every walk of life – and you will find Catholic school alumni. Ontario's Catholic teachers believe that the province has one of the best public education systems in the world, and we are proud that Catholic schools have been a pillar of the system since before Confederation. The bottom line is that the system is working.

Let's work together on the real problems in education!
