

HYPOCRISY ON FAITH-BASED SCHOOL FUNDING FROM EDUCATION MINISTER KATHLEEN WYNNE

Here is what Kathleen Wynne wrote to Now in 2001 on faith-based school funding when she was a School Trustee:

<http://www.nowtoronto.com/issues/2001-06-07/letters.html>

Libs and religious schools

as usual in complex public debates, positions are misrepresented. In my phone interview with Enzo Di Matteo (NOW, May 24-30), I attempted to make it clear that my disappointment with the Liberal position on school tax credits, indeed my disappointment with all the political parties' positions, is that none of them has advocated a healthy public debate on this difficult and divisive issue.

In Ontario at this time we have a public education system that is in crisis, suffering under the weight of successive and ill-thought-out reforms, underfunding and bad planning. These are our immediate concerns.

A higher-level and, perhaps for some of us, less vital issue is the fact that in Ontario people of one faith get preferential treatment in the school system. This situation is historical and, as such, has become part of the fabric of our society. Because it is part of our history, however, does not mean we cannot question or examine its validity. That is precisely what the United Nations has asked us to do, and that is exactly what I advocate.

To my mind, the only rational response is to develop a set of principles forged in public debate on which to base a decision. It would not be easy to come to agreement on those principles, but why should that stop us from trying? Why would we expect a deep-seated practice could be changed and the conflict resolved simply?

I do not believe that the Liberals should have taken a position on one side of this issue or the other. I believe we should have raised the issue as a societal question that needs to be discussed. We need sane, rational discussion of the adequacy of resources currently available to fund public education, the expectations that would be imposed on funded parochial schools, the merits or problems that would flow from the creation of one public school board, the historical commitments to the Catholic community and the promises inherent in our commitment to diversity in this country.

When I made that suggestion to fellow Liberals, I was dismissed as way off base. Now, once again, we Liberals are forced to react to one of Harris's destructive, divisive pieces of legislation. What's worse, we have to pretend that we think there is an easy, simple answer to this question.

Kathleen Wynne
Public School Trustee, Ward 8

Now that she is Education Minister, has she abandoned her principles and turned a blind eye to discrimination?