



COMMUNIQUÉ

ASSOCIATION FRANCO-ONTARIENNE DES CONSEILS SCOLAIRES CATHOLIQUES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Election Ontario 2007

French-language Catholic Education Gathers Solid Support from Ontario's Three Main Political Parties

Toronto, 28 September 2007 – The Association franco-ontarienne des conseils scolaires catholiques (AFOCSC) is sharing the results of its pre-election exercise focused on the political parties facing off in the Ontario Election 2007. “I am pleased to be able to state that the three main parties – namely the Liberals, Conservatives and New Democrats – all support French-language Catholic education in Ontario and the school systems as they currently exist”, said AFOCSC President, Robert Tremblay.

At the other end of the spectrum lies the Green Party, wanting to eliminate Catholic schools and the Ontario Provincial Confederation of Regions Party with the Communist Party, both recommending the abolition of French-language education. “Frank De Jong of the Green Party is advocating an end to provincial testing, the abolition of the Ontario College of Teachers, and the elimination of Catholic schools. This would be harmful to Ontario and I encourage electors not to vote for this party”, Tremblay advised.

This pre-election exercise consisted of:

1. meetings with key Liberal, Conservative and New Democratic MPPs
2. a questionnaire on party support for French-language Catholic education in Ontario, and
3. an analysis of the electoral platforms of all political parties

During meetings with those responsible for matters pertaining to education and Francophone affairs, all main parties strongly supported the four existing school systems. Robert Tremblay had one request to make: “I urge parents of the 70,000 students attending our 265 elementary and secondary schools to ask candidates showing up on their doorstep if they support French-language Catholic education in Ontario”.

The purpose of this exercise is to clarify and influence the political parties' positions on French-language Catholic education and to communicate to the province's school community the level of support coming from each party.

“I encourage members of our school communities to find out more about each party's position before exercising their right to vote on October 10. French-language Catholic education is at the heart of the current political debate; French-language Catholic education is at the heart of a modern and competitive Ontario. Well-advised choices are crucial, and I am calling on the electorate to support a party that guarantees us stability and continuity of our development”, concluded AFOCSC President Robert Tremblay.

The Association franco-ontarienne will continue to promote and protect French-language Catholic schools and will strive to secure appropriate funding for the Catholic system by working in conjunction with the elected Government.

The Association franco-ontarienne des conseils scolaires catholiques is the spokesperson for the eight French-language Catholic school boards serving more than 70,000 young Franco-Ontarians.

NB: See Analysis Results Table with details in appendix or visit our website at www.afocsc.org.

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ANALYSIS RESULTS TABLE

1. MEETINGS
2. QUESTIONNAIRE
3. ELECTION PLATFORMS

RESULTS	Liberal Party of Ontario	Conservative Party of Ontario	Ontario New Democratic Party
1. MEETINGS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - support for the four existing school systems has been confirmed many times during meetings with the Minister of Education, Kathleen Wynne, and with the Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs, Madeleine Meilleur. - support also confirmed in meetings with Minister Wynne's Parliamentary Assistants, Liz Sandals et Ted McMeekin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - support for the Catholic system goes hand in hand with the proposed funding of all faith-based schools - support for maintaining the four school systems confirmed in a meeting with Education Critic Frank Klees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - support for the four existing school systems confirmed in a meeting with Education and Training Critic Rosario Marchese and Francophone Affairs Critic Gilles Bisson
	* Note: the AFOCSC did not seek meetings with the alternative parties		

Results	Liberal Party of Ontario	Conservative Party of Ontario	Ontario New Democratic Party
QUESTIONNAIRE (sent to all parties)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Party Leader Dalton McGuinty answered the three questions in French 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - response in French offered by the Head Office 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -bilingual responses offered by the Head Office
	Question a) support for the existing four school systems in Ontario	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -rejection of pressures to amend the Constitution -smaller class sizes -improve EQAO results - homework help -increased number of graduates -Standing Working Group on FL -Language Planning Policy -42% increase in funding (\$327-M) i.e. \$4,056 per student since 2002-2003 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -full support for public education and for the four current school systems -the public system should integrate other faith-based schools wanting to receive provincial funding -the lack of equity (funding for Catholic schools only) represents a threat for the future of the French-language catholic system in Ontario
Question b) support measures for French-language Catholic schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - improve access to F.L. schools - \$220- M for construction of new schools -reduce the gap between the number of courses offered in English-language and French-language sec. schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -increase funding towards education worth 2,44 billion dollars (compared to the 2006-2007 level) by 2011-2012 -increase of 'per student amount' to compensate student population decline -immediate funding formula review to implement changes by 2008-2009 -annual review of the funding formula -additional funding of 182 million dollars for 2007- 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - comprehensive review of the school funding formula before March 2008 to ensure the four school systems have enough money to address all the needs of their students.

<p>Question c) legislative amendment to rectify the existing school supporter identification system in Ontario</p>	<p>- Statistics Canada data are used -aware of the limitations of the current system -will continue discussions with (MPAC) to ensure the data is collected as efficiently as possible</p>	<p>2008 -equitable funding for all four systems -aware of the importance of an accurate voters' list and their support for each school system -ready for an open dialogue on ways to improve the taxpayers' support identification system</p>	<p>We believe the school funding formula has minimized the impact of supporter preference in determining the funding of individual school systems - review of the funding formula will address all the characteristics of the formula -analysis needed to determine if this formula addresses the needs of the students of the French-language Catholic schools.</p>
<p>Answers of the other parties to the questionnaire</p>	<p>Family Coalition Party of Ontario : a. will introduce "parental choice system", whereby parents are free to choose the school for their children. The money will follow that decision. The amount of money is calculated as the average cost per pupil per year (i.e. total education budget divided by the number of students). Exceptions (more money) are only for special education needs. In this view, nothing will change as far as government supporting the four systems. b. "By allowing parental choice, freedom and decentralization, we believe that there will always be schools in adequate number and high standard, that people of French culture (and others) can choose for their children. For example, in a town with 80 families and 100 children who require French education, the amount of money available for a school would approximately be \$8,000 x 100, or \$800,000/year." c. "This default assignment to English public school boards is not right. However, our system would make this identification unnecessary and unrelated to residential properties. Education funding would be from general taxes, not from property taxes. The government money for the education of each child (essentially a voucher) would go to the parents of children of school age and they direct it (through a bank) to the school of their choice." The Ontario Provincial Confederation of Regions Party: (a,b,c) "We believe in one public school system and one working language for Ontario."</p>		

Results	Liberal Party	Conservative Party	NDP
<p>3. ANALYSIS OF ELECTION PLATFORMS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - homework help - specialized schools (eg. math/sciences) - 18% increase for ESL courses and 8% for special needs - \$150-M for Grades 4-8 to continue class-size reduction - \$10-M for autistic children - \$3.1-billion by 2011 and review of funding formula in 2010 - + support staff and vice principals - family literacy centres - funding of full-time kindergarten - 85% secondary school graduation rate by 2010 with special help for at-risk students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - creation and funding of other faith-based schools - funding increase of \$800-M in 2006-2007 up to \$2.4-billion in 2011 -flexibility to meet local needs -equitable funding for maintenance and operations - class-size reduction - funding of the real costs of transportation and non-teaching staff -will demand improved quality of education – standardized tests – with financial recognition for top performing schools -reduce homework - decision-making power of parent committees on matters of safety, anti-violence programs - investment for the support of specialized education -funding for autistic children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -support for the four existing school systems -yearly review of funding formula -flexible funding for local priorities (specialized education, school repairs) in the amount of \$200 per student -support for autistic children

Noteworthy platform details for other political parties

Family Coalition Party of Ontario:

- parental choice of school
- standardized tests in Grades 5, 8 and 10
- “Child education cheque” or “Voucher” per child

Communist Party of Canada:

- \$20 billion investment over 5 years in a single school system
- new funding formula

Ontario Provincial Confederation of Regions Party:

- a single public English-language education system
- elimination of Bill 8 pertaining to French Language Services

Freedom Party:

- instead of paying a school tax, parents will pay only for the school their child attends
- annual testing

Green Party of Ontario:

- one school system with an English-language and a French-language network

Libertarian Party of Ontario:

- eliminate government intervention
- parental choice of school