

# Civil Rights In Public Education, Inc.

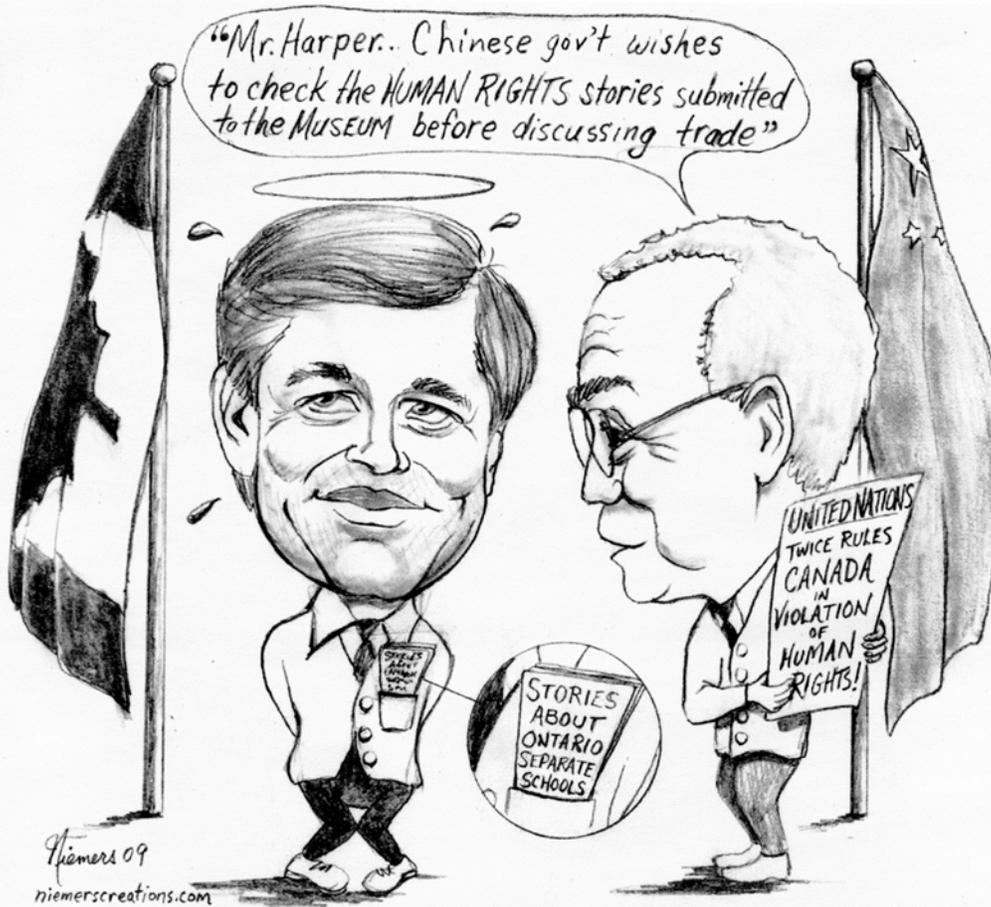
All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Fall 2009

Issue Number 101

## Share your story with the Canadian Museum for Human Rights.



Located in Winnipeg, the Canadian Museum for Human Rights is Canada's newest national museum whose mission is to enhance the understanding of human rights, to promote respect for others and to encourage reflection and dialogue.

The following, to the end on page 3, is re-printed with permission from <http://www.humanrightsmuseum.ca/share-your-story>.

### Mission Statement

Established by Parliament through amendments to the *Museums Act* on March 13, 2008, which came into force on August 10, 2008, the Canadian Museum for Human Rights (CMHR) is envisioned as a national and international destination—a centre of learning where Canadians and people from around the world can engage in discussion and commit to taking action against hate and oppression.

As with all of Canada's National Museums, the CMHR will play an essential role in:

- Preserving and promoting our heritage at home and abroad
- Contributing to the collective memory and sense of identity of all Canadians

### IN THIS ISSUE

Canadian Museum for Human Rights	1
Share your story	2
A teacher's story of discrimination	3
Social Division in Mattawa	5
It's up to us	5
Make a submission to the Ontario NDP school funding Task Force	6
Petition form to the NDP's Task Force on funding	7
QUESTION: Poll result for one school system	8

- Inspiring research, learning, and entertainment that belong to all Canadians.

The Canadian Museum for Human Rights is a member of the Canadian Heritage Portfolio and reports to Parliament through the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

The purpose of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, as set out in the new legislation, is as follows:

- to explore the subject of human rights, with special but not exclusive reference to Canada, in order to enhance the public's understanding of human rights, to promote respect for others and to encourage reflection and dialogue (Museums Act).

### **A federal corporation**

As a federal Crown Corporation, the CMHR receives its operational funding from the Government of Canada.

The Canadian Museum for Human Rights is a distinct legal entity, wholly-owned by the Crown, which operates at arm's length from the Government in its day to day operations, activities and programming. Under the Museums Act, the Museum's Board of Trustees serves as its governing body and is accountable to Parliament for the stewardship of the Museum, through the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages.

[www.humanrightsmuseum.ca](http://www.humanrightsmuseum.ca)

Editor's comment.

As noted above, the federal government has a hand in this, and considering its obvious position on the separate school issue, we will be monitoring the museum's approach.

For now, and until proven otherwise, CRIPE will give the museum the benefit of the doubt.

## **Share Your Story**

Do you have a personal story related to human rights? Have members of your family, your ancestors, or people in your community had an experience of discrimination, freedom, or opportunity that needs to be shared?

Your experiences can help shape the permanent exhibitions and public programs of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights. Your story will become part of our archive of histories so that others can learn from your experiences.

The aim is to identify stories and perspectives that can be incorporated into the Museum, and to receive feedback on how the Museum can establish an ongoing dialogue with Canadians on important human rights issues.

"Knowledge of the evolution of human rights in Canada is essential in order to better understand both our failures and our successes," stated Mr. Yude Henteleff, C.M., Q.C., LL.D. (Hon) Chair of the Content Advisory Committee. "In turn this will, hopefully, lead us to overcome the forces of discrimination, oppression and inequality. The input we will be receiving from CAC's sessions across Canada over the next 12 months will tell the Museum how and what it must share in order to achieve those objectives.

"We are eager to begin a dialogue with the public on their expectations for the Museum," said Patrick O'Reilly, Chief Operating Officer of the Canadian Museum for Human

Rights. "Canadians have interesting stories and unique perspectives on human rights, and we look forward to including these in the Museum."

### **Guidelines for Stories**

**Q:** What kinds of stories is the Museum looking for?

We hope to collect a range of stories, past events or current events; stories from Canada or from other countries; stories that involve you personally or members of your family or community.

Stories can include (but are not limited to):

- Experiences of discrimination, or unfair or unequal treatment
- Experiences of threat or harm based on who you are or what you believe
- Stories of overcoming and/or confronting discrimination
- Opportunities that came about because human rights were or are being protected or upheld
- Recognition or awards given for resisting discrimination and upholding freedom and opportunity
- Stories of how you treated others unequally or unfairly because of who they are or what they believe
- People or events that have inspired you to respect and honour human rights and responsibilities
- Images, symbols, objects, words, music, or art that symbolise human rights to you.

**Q:** In what form should I present my story?

If you submit your story online, you can record it on video (make sure we have clear sound!), submit it as text in a PDF or Microsoft Word document, or submit photographs. Submissions can be made in either official language.

**Q:** I know a story to share, but it is not my own. Do I tell you about it?

Yes! We are relying on you to point us in the right direction. Please let us know if there are individuals or groups we should be speaking to by referring us through the link below or by attending a public roundtable held in your area.

**Q:** What will the Museum do with my story?

We may use your story in a variety of ways. For instance, your story may help shape the permanent exhibitions at the Museum, may be used as a quotation on a wall or as part of a multimedia display. Stories may be used to direct our researchers and designers, may appear in print material or materials for schools distributed by the Museum, or may be used to educate others on the work of the Museum.

**Please note:** *We reserve the right to use submitted stories in whole, in part, or not at all, depending on the needs of the Museum.*

**Q:** How will you select stories to use in the Museum?

With support from the Content Advisory Committee, a range of experts, and our exhibition designers, the Museum's curatorial team will select stories for use in exhibitions based on a number of criteria. We are most likely to select

- Stories that are symbolic or representative of a wider experience or event of historical significance
- Stories that are particularly moving or evocative
- Stories that enable the Museum to ask others to consider their own experiences, attitudes, & actions.
- Stories that allow us to make linkages and connections between people, experiences, and ideas or help clarify a particular idea or emotion.

**Q:** Are all submitted stories guaranteed to appear in the Museum?

Unfortunately, we do not have the space to accommodate all individual stories in the Museum. However, all submitted stories will be considered when our curators develop storylines for Museum exhibitions. Also, many stories will serve as background material, helping to shape our public programs and future exhibitions. Whether or not it appears in the museum, your story **will** make a difference!

**Q:** Can I tell you my story in confidence?

As a national public space for dialogue and reflection, the Museum will be gathering only stories that can be shared. When submitting a story, we ask that you read and accept a waiver permitting us to use your stories for the benefit of others.

**Q:** Will I receive any financial reward for sharing my story?

The Museum does not pay for submitted stories, however your story will be acknowledged.

**Q:** How will I know if my story appears in the Museum?

You will receive notification from us via e-mail if your story is to appear in a specific place in the Museum.

If you have any further questions or concerns on story submission, please contact the Museum at

1 877 295 6639 or email

[rsvp@humanrightsmuseum.ca](mailto:rsvp@humanrightsmuseum.ca).

## Share your own story

With the instructions outlined in the foregoing, and the following example, CRIPE encourages all readers to share their story.

The more they receive, the more they will realize we have a real problem – all across Ontario.

## **A teacher who was forced to quit her job in a Roman Catholic school because she is not of the Roman Catholic faith.**

An account by Barbara Santamaria, used with permission.  
An example of the type of story which could be shared with the Museum

I applied for a job with the Dufferin-Peel Roman Catholic Board in 1983 and I went for my interview knowing that I was going to be asked for a reference from my parish priest which I don't have, because I am Jewish.

### **Fully qualified**

I was fully qualified for the advertised position to teach English and French, I went to the interview, which proceeded normally, however I did get asked by the superintendent about the where-abouts of my

letter of reference from my parish priest, to which I responded: "I don't have one."

### **Important to be Catholic**

That indicated to them that I was probably not Catholic. They made a point of mentioning: "It is very important to us that our teachers be Catholic because we really want our students to be immersed in the religion and the doctrine." I responded with: "I understand and respect that, and my intention is to teach French and English, as that will be my job."

To this he added: "We want those students to walk down the halls feeling like Catholics and to open their lockers feeling like Catholics." To this I had no reply.

### **No discrimination**

I got the job, the school was fine and I never felt any discrimination whatsoever from the teachers because religion probably never entered into it. They never asked me if I was a Catholic, and I didn't volunteer any information to the contrary.

The only time there were some awkward moments for me was the odd time that the home room teacher had to lead the students in prayer. This was easily overcome, and the students never noticed any discomfort on my part.

There was one instance where I had to have my dog put down. He was ill; it was a very emotional time for me, and when I came back to the classroom I proceeded to talk about the experience with the students.

### **What a reaction!**

I ventured forth with my opinion that this should be made available to human beings as it was an act of kindness, and of course all these hands shot up — what a reaction!

My husband, who is a Catholic, explained to me when I told him the story that euthanasia is completely contrary to the Catholic doctrine. This was my first inkling of why the Catholic system doesn't want non-Catholics involved in the education of their children.

### **Accidental pregnancy**

While I was at the school that year I conceived my son, an accidental pregnancy, and delivered him prematurely, so that he was born in March instead of June. Obviously I had to miss school for the balance of that academic year.

### **Board tried to make me quit**

When the Board found out about my situation, they tried to make me quit. I had to involve the union and found that no reason was given for this request.

The irony of the situation, where the discrimination came in, was that the Catholic Board — *especially the Catholic Board* — wasn't saying, "Bravo for you! We have an accidental pregnancy here but you didn't have an abortion — what a shining example you are!"

### **Pregnancy was disruptive**

Instead, they implied that having a baby early was disruptive to the school year. Of course as soon as you get the union involved, the Board is very careful about what it says.

In this instance, my union representative called me to let me know that he had arranged with the Board for me to resign and be re-hired for the following academic year.

### **Off the record – wrong religion**

Off the record he told me that the reason they were trying to get rid of me was because they had found out that I was Jewish.

### **Clarification**

(It was the board trying to get rid of me, not the principal.)

The school and the principal were great. The Board wanted me out. It started with them asking me for my letter of reference from the parish priest which I could not produce, and finished with a request for my resignation.

### **Needed a teacher of French**

Off the record, and according to my union rep, this was due to the fact that I am a Jew. I believe that the only reason they went outside the Catholic religion to

begin with was because they were having difficulty finding a French teacher. It suited them to have me at the time, however as soon as the opportunity presented itself, they chose to let me go, using my pregnancy as the reason.

### **Resigned**

I proceeded with the resignation/rehiring, only to resign permanently in September, as it became clear that being the mother of a premature infant was in itself a full-time job.

### **Humiliating experience**

The experience was humiliating and demeaning. Had I not needed to stay at home, I'm not sure I would have felt welcome back at the school. Although the school at no time showed me any discrimination, they would have been apprised of the situation by the Board. This would have made for a very uncomfortable environment had I returned in September.

### **Outright discrimination**

What is clear in all of this is that I was discriminated against by a publicly-funded Board solely because of my religion. I believe strongly that this is an obvious act of discrimination, supported by a government which prides itself as a multicultural and tolerant body of law makers, a government that has already been reprimanded twice by the United Nations Human Rights Committee for a violation of Article 26 — the equality provision — of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

### **Stand up against injustice**

Furthermore, those of us who stand up against this injustice will hopefully be able to make a difference for future generations, to ensure fair and equitable access to employment in all publicly-funded educational institutions.

## **Social division in Mattawa – the typical result of four school boards**

Mattawa is a town in east-central Ontario on Highway #17 at the confluence of the Ottawa and Mattawa Rivers. It is about 65 km east of North bay and 105 km west of Deep River. The closest village, 20 km to the west, is Eau Claire, population 32, and to the east is Deux Rivieres, population 20, 34 km distant. The town of Mattawa itself boasts around 2000 souls, down from 2,500 in 1996.

Nevertheless, and despite a record provincial deficit, the Conseil Scolaire Catholique Franco-Nord has approval to build a \$9.1 million high school which will have an inaugural class of around 100 students.

The old high school, F. J. McEligott, owned by the Near North English Public Board, has a capacity of 400 students. This Public school has been shared by English Catholic and French Catholic students for 25 years. F. J. McEligott will be left with about 130 students.

### **Community division**

An article in the North Bay Nugget reported that “some fear (the new high school) will tear the community apart”. It was further reported that:

Some people are afraid construction of a second high school — with plans to eventually incorporate junior kindergarten to Grade 6 students from Ste. Anne school — will divide the small town.

Mayor Dean Backer has said the biggest fear is the separation of the students.

He said if a new high school is built, he would like to see a facility that would accommodate all students, as well as have enough room to accommodate a library and other services that could benefit the entire community.

But (board chair) Demers said the board has been in touch with French Catholic ratepayers and it's their wish this goes ahead.

"We've been renting space for many years, but we've qualified for new pupil places," he said.

"The government (of Ontario) accepted our business plan and recognized our charter and rights."

### **More division**

At a later meeting with municipal politicians, The “Nugget” further reported:

"You are to blame for the dissension in our community," said Coun. Garry Thibert, who suggested the board should have had more consultations with the town regarding its new school.

His comments were applauded by some and booed by others among the standing-room-only crowd.

"What I don't like to see tonight is that knife cutting down, dividing our community," he said.

### **Typical result**

This situation in Mattawa is typical of the social division which takes place in many other small northern Ontario communities which are shrinking in population and have multiple school systems. Social division, and the possibility of a community losing a public school is one of the main reasons CRIPE is so opposed to publicly-funded separate schools.

See also “**The White River Fiasco**” Spring 2005 Issue #87

## **It's up to us**

**The Green Party is on side with us for one school system. But our goal is to have all political parties for one system. Some members are lobbying the Conservatives, and others are active with the Ontario New Democratic Party (ONDP).**

**An ONDP motion, passed at its last convention, called for the establishment of a Task Force to: “...examine all public education funding options...”**

**The Task Force is scheduled to meet at the end of March, 2010 to consider submissions. It will accept input from NDP members. Input from others will be forwarded to the Task Force by CRIPE. See page six.**

**A petition form is printed on page seven. If you are not an NDP member, please photocopy the petition, sign your own name, gather a few others, and send it in to CRIPE.**

**Write a one-page letter which gives a few reasons to support one public school system. NDPers, send to Task Force directly. Others, send to CRIPE for forwarding.**

**The more submissions the Task Force receives from us, the better chance the decision could go our way. We ask for your support.**

**It's up to us –  
so let's do it.**

## **Make a submission to the Ontario New Democratic Party's Task Force on school funding**

The Task Force is to study and make recommendations to the Ontario NDP Provincial Council regarding the public funding options for Ontario's schools. The options are:

- to provide public funds for public schools and for the schools of all faith groups,
- to provide public funds for public schools and the Roman Catholic separate schools,
- to provide public funds for just one, secular, public school system for everyone,
- other options to include private and independent schools.

The Task Force will be accepting submissions, concerning arguments for the options, until March 19, 2010. The deliberations of the Task Force will take into account input on all aspects of education funding which will include governance, constitutional and other legal issues, present day Ontario demographics, polling, the effects on small communities, and so on.

It would be appropriate to have submissions focus on the stated NDP education guiding principles of “inclusiveness and equality for all” — a school system which offers no special privilege for any class of persons so that every student, no matter the student’s background, location, or faith group, will have the same opportunity to fully develop that person’s potential. Be brief and to the point. A long thesis will not have any more impact than points made in a clear and brief manner.

Be personal. If you have no direct association with the religious discrimination suffered by teachers and students through the public support of separate schools, tell the Task Force how the policy of political parties which discriminates on the basis of religious belief is personally insulting and diminishes your feeling of dignity and self worth. Since the Task Force is expected to accept input from other than NDP members, all CRIPE members are encouraged to respond.

### **Your submission**

- 1) Photocopy the petition on page 7, sign it, preferably with a few others.
- 2) Write a one-page letter to the Task Force stating your reasons for one, secular, publicly-funded school system
- 3) All submissions must include your name, address, phone number and e-mail (if none, say so)

### **CRIPE members who are **not** NDP members**

Send in your petition form and one-pager, no later than **March 8th**, to:  
CRIPE, Box 491, Pembroke ON K8A 6X7 OR [publiced@igs.net](mailto:publiced@igs.net)

### **CRIPE members who are **also** NDP Members**

Send in your petition form and one-pager, no later than **March 15th**, to:  
Valorie Block, Executive Assistant to the Provincial Secretary, Ontario NDP  
101 Richmond Street East, Toronto ON M5C 1N9  
phone: 416-591-8637 ext.244 fax: 416-599-4820 e-mail: [vblock@on.ndp.ca](mailto:vblock@on.ndp.ca)

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**A PETITION  
TO THE ONTARIO NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY**

We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, petition the Ontario New Democratic Party to:

- ◆ Ensure that Ontario’s publicly-funded school systems bring students of all backgrounds together in an environment that fosters mutual respect and understanding while respecting their fundamental equality and helping them to realize their full potential as citizens.
- ◆ Eliminate costly duplication in the Ontario school systems in order to minimize infrastructure costs, eliminate destructive religious divisiveness in small communities, and maximize opportunities for student development.
- ◆ Ensure that publicly-funded schools in Ontario do not discriminate on the basis of religion in any form, including: school environment, student enrollment, employment of teachers and all other school board personnel, adherence to Ministry of Education curriculum guidelines including world and comparative religions.
- ◆ Ensure that all publicly-funded school boards have enforceable policies that provide a positive school environment for students of all races, cultures, religions and sexual preferences.
- ◆ Ensure that publicly-funded school boards have the option to permit voluntary religious programs for students provided by local faith groups outside of regular classroom hours.

Therefore, the petitioners request that the Ontario New Democratic Party support and promote legislation to establish an educational system that meets the above criteria for each official language, namely English and French.

Name (print)	Signature	Address
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Photocopy this page and obtain a few signatures.  
Return the completed page to the appropriate address on page 6.

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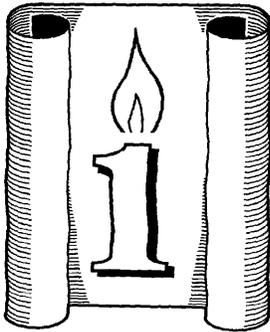
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## WHO WE ARE

Civil Rights in Public Education, Inc. is an organization composed of citizens of differing backgrounds, living in more than 155 communities across Ontario, committed to one strong public education system, which offers neither privilege nor prejudice to anyone.

## OUR AIMS ARE

- To serve as advocates for civil rights in public education so that the public is informed about the issue of publicly-funded separate schools.
- To hasten the day when Ontario's education policy recognizes the dignity and worth of all children, their right to equality, and their right to freedom from religious discrimination.



## OUR LOGO

Our logo is composed of a background scroll representing the charters of rights which guarantee fundamental freedoms to all individuals; the numeral "1" signifies equality and social unity in one public education system for each official language; the flame above is the universal symbol for freedom.

## Question

**Which of the following statements best reflects your view of religion and education?**

Taxpayers should fund only public schools - religious teachings should take place outside of school if parents wish

68%

Taxpayers should fund both public and religious-based schools, so children can study faith-based teachings if parents choose

32%

This Leger Marketing poll was conducted exclusively for Sun Media using a web panel in October 2009. A total of 2,538 interviews were completed with Canadian adults. Maximum margin of error of +/-2% 19 times out of 20,

<http://lifewise.canoe.ca/living/2009/11/19/11812086-sun.html>

There has never been popular support for the public funding of religious-based schools in Ontario.

## A Thought to Consider

So long as there is discrimination against any member of our society, we break the promises about equality and fairness that we have made to our children, to our fellow citizens and to the world at large.

Gordon Fairweather,  
first head of the Canadian Human Rights Commission

To be added to the mailing list, send \$20.00 to  
Civil Rights in Public Education, Inc.  
Box 491 Pembroke ON K8A 6X7

Edited by Renton Patterson

Phone: 613-735-5069

[publiced@igs.net](mailto:publiced@igs.net)      [www.CRIPEweb.org](http://www.CRIPEweb.org)

Member of the **One School System Network**  
[www.onessn.org/](http://www.onessn.org/)

**ABOVE ALL WE MUST MAKE SURE THAT NO CITIZEN OF ONTARIO, NOW, OR EVER IN THE FUTURE, IS PRIVILEGED OR DISADVANTAGED PUBLICLY BECAUSE OF HIS/HER FAITH, OR ABSENCE OF FAITH.**