A FAUX PAS REVISITED (SURVEY RESULTS)

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Category: Opinions

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Bread and butter issues such as health, education, taxes, crime, poverty and homelessness ordinarily dominate the discussions during provincial election campaigns. Every now and then leadership style or a gross scandal becomes the pivotal subject of the debate.

Unfortunately, the divisive issue of faith-based school funding consumed almost everybody's attention this time around. In the process it opened a can of worms, namely the unfair exclusive funding of Catholic schools. For all practical purposes there was a flip-flop towards the end, and the whole concept of faith-based school funding came under scrutiny with calls for abandoning the practice in its entirety.

On September 17th the problem was raised in the note *A Faux Pas*. Questions were put forth whether the Armenian Community at large was aware of this matter, and who was or were the people that spoke on behalf of the whole community. My guess was that no adequate consultations had taken place. To date neither acknowledgement nor refutation has materialized. To find out whether I was the only "ignorant" person a survey was conducted and emails sent to Armenians in Canada.

It was carried between 1st and 7th of October. The end point was to count the first 100 responses from Ontario for observations. The first 40 answers were manually entered by respondents via emails and they were verifiable in terms of location and person. The additional 60 entries were of on-line source, and could be verified only for location. It was a mixed bag.

Responses received from outside Ontario are not included in the present analysis. Given the variance of the two batches of respondents two separate statistical data are presented here. One for the first 40 manual entries and another that includes all 100 responses. Drawing conclusions is left to the readers.

Observations:

These cursory observations are based solely on above mentioned one hundred responses and cannot be extrapolated as the survey was not designed in line with strict statistical guidelines.

1) A majority was following the political debate,
2) A majority is not in favor of faith-based school funding,
3) A majority supports a uniform public curriculum funded by the province,
4) Four persons were approached to present their opinion,
5) Five persons were aware who participated in the 28th August meeting,
6) One person had given proxy or consent

General Remark: 1, 2 & 3 are in line with how a majority of Ontarians have responded based on polls in the local press.

Element of bias: The email list contains a cross section of people that hold a variety of religious and political views.

However, it is not possible to ascertain whether people of opposing views are equally represented in this very limited survey.

For the sake of completeness some representative comments are provided below:

Q2 No, including the Catholic schools (constitutional amendment is needed)

Q3 Yes, which to me means cutting off all public funds to so-called "Catholic" schools through a minor constitutional amendment, just as Quebec and Newfoundland did 10 years ago.

Q3 Yes, but we should make allowance for other schools under private funding.

Q3 Yes, however, community schools should have the option to function.

Q3 Why should the curriculum be any different between schools?

Q4 No, I only heard that we better vote for John Tory because Armenian schools will get government funding. What a short sighted reason and argument for electing any candidate

Q5 I don't know what the August 28th meeting was about and who it was for.

Q6 Absolutely not. (They) would likely say they speak for the entire Armenian community, even though they only represent an extremist minority, albeit a vocal one (unfortunately, the silent majority goes along).

General Comments left on the site:

1) Instead of dividing our community to different faith based schools, we should ensure all our children are brought together to learn and get along with each other.

2) As a Catholic one would think I would have a vested interest in maintaining faith-based schools. But I think they are divisive and drain the public-school system of much needed funds. As well, if Catholics are allowed then it follows logically that all other faiths should also--and that would mean the end of the public-school system. There are those who feel this isn't a bad thing. But these are usually people with the money to be able to afford to send their children to private schools.

3) I believe that there should be uniformity to a certain extent in the curriculum of the public schools. However, when faith schools are funded by the taxpayers' money, they should be allowed to teach their heritage and ethnic values, after following the academic curriculum provided by the government.

4) I spend summers in Quebec, where laic schools passed, as in Newfoundland, without any great problems. I wish to see the same thing in Ontario, and the abolition of special treatment for Roman Catholic schools. The growing diversity of nationalities, ethnicities, and religious beliefs will be good for all of our children - but not if they are separated by religious beliefs in the school system.

5) In my opinion, the state and church should be separate, public money shouldn't be used to fund religious/faith based schools. The government should direct the efforts and resources to bringing

people and different communities together. Funding faith based schools essentially would increase the risk of segregation, division of society into different groups that have different values and goals. That's a major force threatening the sovereignty of any state.

6) I have no children; however I was educated in the public system and turned out fine by most peoples' standards anyway!

7) It is one's right to practice one's faith, but society must be uniform to benefit all.

8) All faiths should be respected. However, other issues need to be addressed in Ontario at this point.

9) To me, public does not mean secular. I represent a large family, all Christians. We pay taxes, we live in this society, and we participate. If we want our Children to be taught Christian values in the educational system we are paying for we have that right. If one group opposes this OK, but they can't dictate to me what I will believe. (USA)