



## *Message from Queen's Park*



*Monthly Column by MPP John Yakabuski*

February 2008

During last year's provincial election campaign, Dalton McGuinty said he stood squarely opposed to the funding of religious based schools in Ontario, even if they were part of the public school system. He said religious schools segregated children and he would not support such an idea. He further stated that children of all backgrounds should learn together, that learning separately would only accentuate their differences. Based on the election results, the people of Ontario shared his view. It would now seem that McGuinty did not really believe what he was saying. Recently, he stood by and said nothing as the Toronto District School Board approved the establishment of an Afrocentric school in Toronto. Now let me see if I've got this right. We will not segregate children on the basis of religion but we will on the basis of skin colour. What's more obvious? If you meet someone on the street, you may not immediately know their religion but you will certainly be aware that their skin is a different colour than yours. The Premier had one of his typically weak responses to the Toronto District School Board's decision. He said he didn't agree with it but that he wouldn't do anything to stop it. The Government has the legislative authority to prevent the board from proceeding with this plan and if Mr. McGuinty had a spine, he would do just that.

The stated logic behind the plan is because there is such a high drop out rate among children from the black community. Their reason is that there is not enough teaching about Black history or positive black role models. As a result black kids become bored and disinterested in school, drop-out and join a gang. They suggest an Afrocentric school is going to change all that.

Here's my theory - This is about Power & Politics not about improving the lives of black children.

IF the Toronto & District School Board and the liberal government truly believed that segregating black children would work; why aren't they doing it everywhere, not just one school. They will use statistics to show success.

Of course the graduation rates and marks among the students will be much higher because the children picked to go to this exclusive, one of a kind school will be the ones who were headed in the right direction anyway. The children at risk or those headed for trouble won't be attending this school. The people in charge will want to ensure a problem free school. The real problem here is guns, gangs and crime. A new school serving a very small percentage of the community – hand picked to ensure success – is not going to do anything but make a few activists happy. Dalton McGuinty must shut this down and deal with problems head on.

He did come out after winter hibernation recently to say he was planning to remove the Lord's Prayer from legislative proceedings. With the province facing huge challenges in everything from Health and Long Term Care to the economy – this is his priority. SAD!

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