

## FAITH-BASED EDUCATION AND MULTICULTURALISM IN ONTARIO

YOU'VE GOT TO PUT YOUR MONEY WHERE YOUR MOUTH IS': HOW JEWISH ADVOCACY  
ORGANISATIONS IN ONTARIO UNDERSTAND THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PUBLIC  
FUNDING FOR FAITH-SCHOOLS AND MULTICULTURALISM.

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A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE  
MASTER OF ARTS

MCMASTER UNIVERSITY

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MASTER OF ARTS (2008)

McMaster University

(Religious Studies)

Hamilton, Ontario

TITLE: "You've got to put your money where your mouth is": How Jewish Advocacy Organisations in Ontario Understand the Relationship between Public Funding for Faith-Schools and Multiculturalism.

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NUMBER OF PAGES: v, 212

## ABSTRACT:

This thesis discusses the ways in which arguments for equity in faith-based education funding were constructed by some of the major advocacy organisations within the Ontario Jewish community during the period June-October 2007. On June 8<sup>th</sup> 2007 John Tory, the leader of the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party, announced that if he should be victorious in the October Ontario provincial elections, his principal education policy would be to extend public funding to independent faith schools of all religions. He avowed that the extant system, in which the province of Ontario extends public funding to Roman Catholic schools, but not to schools of any other religious orientation, was fundamentally unjust. I discuss how Jewish advocacy organisations framed their constructions of equity for faith-school funding as an election issue, and analyse how these organisations relate their search to secure equity for faith-based education funding to multiculturalism.

## Acknowledgements

First and foremost my thanks are owed to the Canadian Rhodes Scholar's Foundation, for putting their faith and trust in my abilities and aspirations. Equally, I wish to thank my supervisor Celia Rothenberg for helping me delineate this project and seeing it through to its completion, as well as offering support along the way. This thesis was a challenge not only as an outsider to the social sciences, but as an outsider to Jewish Canada. Thanks are due to three people who spent much time educating me in the history and dynamics of the community – Louis Greenspan, William Shaffir, and Frank Bialystock. It was a privilege to learn from them. Thanks are also due to my interviewees both for their time and their patience, and their willingness to share their experiences with me. I am grateful to Ellen Badone for her graduate seminar in *Diasporas, Transnationalism and Religious Identity*, and to Dana Hollander, for her advice and guidance over the last two years. Ronald Nettler encouraged me to look north of the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel, and he and Peter Widdicombe helped me to make McMaster my home, for which I have always been incredibly grateful. Thomas Simchak gave immeasurable support along the way, and made it all worthwhile.

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## INTRODUCTION

On June 8<sup>th</sup> 2007 John Tory, the leader of the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party, announced that if he should be victorious in the forthcoming Ontario provincial elections, his principal education policy would be to extend public funding to independent faith schools of all religions. He avowed that the extant system, in which the province of Ontario extends public funding to Roman Catholic schools, but not to schools of any other religious orientation, was fundamentally unjust. “There are some things on which you have to stand on principle” he said “and in this case, the principle is fairness to people of other faiths” (Anonymous 2007: 8). A debate of heated proportions ensued. The standing Premier, Dalton McGuinty of the Ontario Liberal Party, heavily criticized the pledge made by his rival, arguing that funding faith-based schools would “segregate” Ontario’s youth, and that a faith-school education would not instill students with “Canadian” values. Religious advocacy groups publicly opposed this assertion, arguing not only that their faith schools did embody Canadian values, but also protesting the hypocrisy of Dalton McGuinty’s accusations (Shefa 2007: 5). The premier is himself a Roman Catholic who attended Roman Catholic schools in Ontario, his wife teaches at a Roman Catholic school in Ontario, and his children attend Roman Catholic schools in Ontario. To patronize one faith-based school system and yet accuse all others of segregationism seemed not only to be openly hypocritical, but also guilty of public scare-mongering for political ends.

Tory rescinded his commitment to faith-based school funding in early October amidst much media speculation that his voter-base had significantly diminished since his



June statement. On October 10<sup>th</sup> McGuinty, who had previously been thought most likely to lose his Premiership, swept to a landslide victory. Political commentators concluded that the faith-based schools issue had lost Tory the election (see Simpson 2007).

This thesis will examine the different ways in which advocacy organizations within the Jewish community responded to both the Tory campaign, and the wider issue of funding for faith-based schools in Ontario during the period June-October 2007. Jewish advocacy organisations target a dual audience – seeking both to represent the Jewish community to the non-Jewish public and legislature of Ontario, and to advocate on areas of concern to the Jewish community itself. My analysis focuses upon activities directed to the latter of these two audiences, upon the ways in which organisations constructed faith-based school funding as an election issue to the Jewish community. My observations will seek to provide answers to three broad questions:

- i. Who advocated for equity in education funding within the Jewish community, and what were the arguments they employed?
- ii. Do advocacy organisations perceive that Ontario's failure to fund faith-based schools challenges its commitment to multiculturalism?
- iii. Is multiculturalism, as represented by funding schools run by all faith groups, seen by advocacy organisations to be desirable or advantageous?

In this introduction I shall outline the development of faith-based schooling in Ontario and thus delineate the historical context in which the 2007 debate took place. Beginning with a history of education in Canada as it was constitutionally and legally

defined at the time of Confederation in 1867, I shall describe and explain why education is considered to be a matter for provincial jurisdiction. I shall outline some of the ways in which education policy has evolved since 1867, and describe how Canada's adoption of both a policy of multiculturalism in 1977, and a Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982 prompted, in all provinces except Ontario, a re-evaluation of policies relating to faith-based schooling. In doing so, it will become apparent that Ontario's policy of funding Catholic schools in isolation is unique within the Canadian confederation. I will then move on to look at the Jewish community more specifically, and delineate the ways in which Jews in Ontario have been adversely affected by Ontario's education policies. I will conclude by offering a summary of the Jewish education "market-place" as it currently exists in Ontario, specifically in the Greater Toronto Area, and thus demonstrate that faith-based education is seen to be a community priority.

#### 1). A HISTORY OF FAITH-BASED EDUCATION IN CANADA.

There is a definitive difference between the Roman Catholic school system patronized by Premier McGuinty and other faith schools in Ontario. Whilst the former are considered public institutions and receive public funding, the latter are private institutions and receive no funding at all. Ontario maintains four public school boards: French and English secular schools, formally of a Protestant orientation, and French and English Catholic schools. In funding one religious group to the exclusion of all others Ontario is unique not only within Canada, but also, as many of my interviewees were

keen to point out, in the “democratic world.”<sup>1</sup>

The funding of Catholic schools alone is a legacy of a historical compromise made as a part of the 1867 Confederation agreement, the legislation now referred to as the Constitution Act.<sup>2</sup> In 1867 Protestant Anglophones and Roman Catholic Francophones dominated the population of settled Canada. The schools of nineteenth century Canada reflected this religious demographic, being Protestant or Catholic in orientation. As Lois Sweet explains:

Secular education was not only inconceivable, it was also an oxymoron... education and religion were part and parcel of the same thing – an essential good, a necessary whole. And of course, the religion that ruled the day was Christianity. It was the Christians that colonized the country, and it was the Christian churches and their leaders who established the schools (1997: 20).

The 1867 covenant that formed the Canadian confederation sought to achieve a peaceful union between the two “charter groups” by constitutionally enshrining the rights of both linguistic and religious populations to, among other things, publicly maintain school boards. Education was determined to be a matter for provincial, as opposed to national jurisdiction, to be determined according to the values of the majority group in each province. However, the 1867 compromise gave the assurance that the minority religious group of each province at that time – Catholicism in Anglophone Canada and Protestantism in Francophone Canada – would have their educational institutions protected:

**93** In and for each province the Legislature may exclusively make Laws in relation to Education, subject and according to the following provisions: --

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<sup>1</sup> This claim is not strictly true. France to give one example, funds private Catholic schools alone. See La-Crox 1999.

<sup>2</sup> Until 1982, referred to by its former title, the British North America Act

(1) Nothing in any such Law shall prejudicially affect any Right or Privilege with respect to Denominational Schools which any Class of Persons have by Law in the Province at the Union:

(2) All the Powers, Privileges and Duties at the Union by law conferred and imposed in Upper Canada on the Separate Schools and School Trustees of the Queen's Roman Catholic Subjects shall be and the same are hereby extended to the Dissentient Schools of the Queen's Protestant and Roman Catholic Subjects in Quebec:

(3) Where in any Province a System of Separate or Dissentient Schools exists by Law at the Union or is thereafter established by Legislature of the Province, an Appeal shall lie to the Governor General in Council from any Act or Decision of the Provincial Authority affecting any Right or Privilege of the Protestant or Roman Catholic Minority of the Queen's Subjects in relation to Education (Department of Justice, Canada 1867).

Over the course of the next century however, the demographic profile of Canada expanded and changed dramatically. Large numbers of immigrants from all corners of the globe increased Canada's ethnic and cultural diversity and introduced large numbers of other religious traditions into the Catholic-Protestant spectrum (Belkin 1966). In recognition of this increased demographic plurality, Prime Minister Trudeau made a public commitment to a policy of multiculturalism in 1971. In 1982, furthermore, a Charter of Rights and Freedoms was incorporated into the constitution that safeguarded the rights and equality of all religious, cultural and ethnic groups under the law (15.1).

Of the four provinces that joined the confederation in 1867 (Upper and Lower Canada – Ontario and Quebec respectively – and the provinces of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick) all but Ontario have re-interpreted the 1867 legislation on funding Protestant and Catholic faith-based schools alone in accordance with the 1982 Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Following the long history of the Quiet Revolution, Quebec replaced its religious school boards with secular English and French language boards in 1998. Faith-based schools are now considered private, but are eligible for up to 60% of the funding

received by public schools if they meet provincial curriculum standards. In Nova Scotia and New Brunswick religious schools no longer receive any public funding, as is the case in Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland and Labrador, which joined the Confederation in 1873 and 1949 respectively. When British Columbia joined the Canadian confederation in 1871 it established a secular public system, and so considers faith-based schools to be independent schools. They receive a proportion of their funding from the government, and are therefore subject to government regulations that determine the amount of funding each school is eligible to receive based on a complex system of five categories. Alberta established Protestant and Catholic school boards when it joined the Confederation in 1905, and today provides full funding to charter schools in the public system, and partial funding to other faith-based schools that remain private; an arrangement very similar to that which exists in Saskatchewan, which, like Alberta, joined in 1905. Manitoba secularized its school system in 1896, 26 years after it joined the Confederation and adopted a dual system in accordance with section 93 of the British North America Act. Today, Manitoba's private religious schools may apply for up to fifty percent of funding from the public system if they meet provincial guidelines (Purdy 1995).

In all of the provinces in which partial funding for faith-based education is made available from public monies, religious schools are expected to demonstrate their adherence to the provincial curriculum in order to receive financial assistance. There is therefore an expectation that to receive public funds, schools should be able to demonstrate their commitment to teaching "Canadian" values. Financial frameworks have

therefore been actively amended and created in order to allow religious schools of all denominations to present their credibility to receive public funding - thereby expanding the definition of a religious minority from the Protestant/Catholic duality that existed in 1867 to include all religious groups. The expansion of the concept of the “religious minority” can be seen as congruous with both the values espoused in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and with Canada’s multicultural identity.

In Ontario, however, the provincial legislation has shown no such willingness to interpret the rights of minorities with reference to the Charter over the prescriptions of the Constitution Act. There was some debate over the issue between during the mid-eighties under the Conservative Premier William Davies who, in June 1984, announced that public funding would be extended to Catholic schools in Ontario past grade 10 to include grades 11, 12, and 13. His commitment was actualised in July 1985 with the introduction of Bill 30, which implemented funding for all Catholic grades. In the same year, Davies also appointed Bernard Schapiro, then director of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education to produce a report for the government on the private schools of Ontario. Schapiro denounced Bill 30 as discriminatory and advocated in favour of public funding for faith-based schools, provided they meet acceptable criteria, estimating that funding Ontario's private/independent schools would cost about \$75 million per year (Schapiro 1985). In May 2001 the Progressive Conservative Government of Ontario introduced a phased-in tax credit, the "Equity in Education Tax Credit" for parents paying for their children to attend private schools. This was a conciliatory response to the Schapiro report that stopped short of actually publicly funding faith-based schools, but registered, at least

in some way, the fact that there was inequity in the system. However, in October 2003 the new Liberal Government of Ontario repealed (retroactively to January 2003) the Equity in Education Tax Credit. So despite the Schapiro report and government recognition of the inequity of funding one faith-based schools over all others, the government of Ontario continues to fund Roman Catholic faith-based schools in isolation.

## 2.) JEWISH EDUCATION IN ONTARIO: A COMMUNITY PROFILE

As one of the largest and most institutionally organized minority religious groups in Ontario, Jews have played key roles in advocating for funding for faith-based schools. There have been Jewish schools in Canada since the nineteenth century, and the institutional framework that supports and sustains Jewish education has been judged to be the most replete and widely used of all the minority religious communities in Canada. Writing in 2006, Ira Robinson estimated that thirty-five percent of Jewish children in Montreal, and twenty-five percent of Jewish children in Toronto attended Jewish day schools, “the highest and second highest averages for day school attendance in North America” (2006:1).

Yet despite the high levels of Jewish day school attendance, there has been very little published on the history of Jewish education in Canada. Glickman (1981) and Weinfeld (1993; 2001) offer chapters in *The Canadian Jewish Mosaic; The Jews in Canada* and *From Immigration to Integration* that give a good summary of the history of Jewish education in Canada, whilst the PhD thesis written by Martin Sable (1998) analyses Jewish responses to Christian religious instruction in the public school system.

Lois Sweet's *God in the Classroom*, an anthropological, somewhat anecdotal description of a broad spectrum of religious schools in Canada includes a third of a chapter on Jewish schools. A sociological analysis comparing trends in Jewish education in Canada and the US is offered by Stuart Schoenfeld (1999c); and Schoenfeld (1999b) and Scott Davies (1999) have analyzed the ways in which Jewish advocacy organizations have sought equity for faith-based education funding. This collection stands in pale comparison however, to the plethora of historical analyses of religious education in Canada as illustrative of Protestant/Catholic power struggles. As Morton Weinfeld quips "Jewish religious education does not loom large as a subject for analysts of religion in Canada" (Weinfeld 2001b: 196).

The history of the Canadian Jewish community has been aphorized as a "tale of two cities" (Robinson 2006: 1). The largest Jewish population in Canada is now to be found in Toronto, and communities are also located in most of the other major urban centers of the country. From the nineteenth until the early twentieth century however, Montreal was home to the largest Jewish population in Canada (Waller 1987). Jewish students entering the public education system were placed within the province's Protestant schools – on the assumption that if students were not part of the Catholic majority, they fell under the nebulous category "Protestant." Rosenberg demonstrates that in 1916, Jewish students made up almost 45 percent of enrollment in Montreal Protestant schools (1962: 2) a situation that occasioned resentment on both sides, not least after a failed campaign in the 1920's to establish a Jewish school network as a third publicly supported confessional system (Elazar and Waller 1990: 86-7). The placement of Jewish



students in Protestant public schools was extremely problematic, owing to the high levels of Christian religious instruction and proselytizing that students were exposed to. A considerable number of Jewish schools, representing a range of different ideological movements, were therefore established in Montreal in order to keep Jewish children outside of the confessional public system, financed by tuition and fund raising (Tulchinsky 1998: 63-86).

In Ontario the majority group was Protestant. The public schools were therefore dominated by a Protestant orientation that, as Speisman demonstrates, permeated not only religious education, but also the teaching of “secular” subjects, such as history and literature (1979: 131-143). Speisman attributes the founding of Jewish schools in Ontario to be, at least in part, a proactive response against Protestant missionizing activities in Jewish communities and neighborhoods. Glickman (1981), Weinfeld (1993) and Schoenfeld (1999c) however place more stock in the ideological ferment of the Jewish community itself, and the connection made by committed groups to the continuation of their ideology with educating the young in a manner befitting their beliefs and ideas. As Schoenfeld argues, the risk of successful missionizing was never a very potent one: “The issue of the day was not one of whether to stay in the Jewish community or to leave, but whether to identify with the Orthodox who supported Zionism, the Orthodox who opposed Zionism, the religiously liberal, the secular Zionists, or one or another group of socialists” (1999b: 3). As today, Jewish students attending Protestant or public schools might supplement their Jewish education with evening or weekend schooling in Jewish supplementary programs.

The first Jewish day schools were the Talmud Torahs - small community-financed public schools offering religious instruction, based on the model of the *cheder*. The first was established in Montreal in 1896, whilst Toronto's first Talmud Torah was founded in 1907 (Glickman 1981: 114-117). As the demographic profile of the Ontario Jewish community has expanded over the last century, schools professing a wide variety of religious and cultural ideologies have proliferated. Glickman argues that the growth of Jewish education in Toronto has kept pace with the growth of the community's ideological and social and communal infrastructure, suggesting that "today the schools are an extremely elaborate network with programs, ideologies and organizational affiliations as diverse as the community from whose cradle they emerged... Thus for Toronto, and indeed all of Canada, the school is a communal institution rather than a strictly denominational one" (1981: 115).

In 2008 The United Jewish Appeal Federation's Centre for the Advancement of Jewish Education (The *Mercaz*<sup>3</sup>), the umbrella body that assists in funding for Jewish schools in Ontario, offered on its website an updated list of Jewish educational establishments affiliated with its organization (Mercaz 2008a). Combining pre-school, elementary schools, high schools and supplementary programs, the number of Jewish schools in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) totaled one hundred and sixteen institutions. Within the one hundred and sixteen, schools with more than one campus are counted for as many campuses as they support – the Orthodox Eitz Chaim Day School maintains five campuses, for example, whilst the "Traditional" Ahavat Yisrael and Associated Hebrew

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<sup>3</sup> The Hebrew term for 'Centre.'

Schools both boast four campuses apiece. Of the one hundred and sixteen institutions, thirty-one provide pre-schools, twenty-seven provide elementary schools, fourteen provide high schools and forty-four provide supplementary programs to public education. Supplementary programs are different educational institutions in the sense that they operate outside of usual day school hours. As a reflection of the fact that they seek to interest children in Jewish education in their leisure time, a number are named for child-friendly appeal: the community/independent “Jumpin’ for Judaism” at Beth Radom Synagogue, for example, the Orthodox “Torah for Teens” on Bathurst street, and the Conservative “Beth Torah’s Hebrew’s Cool.” The list of denominational ‘options’ open to parents contains the standard Reform, Conservative and Orthodox branches, but also Community/Independent, Traditional, and Humanistic school environments. Of the one hundred and sixteen schools affiliated with the Mercaz, sixteen describe themselves as ideologically Reform, eleven as Conservative, forty-four as Orthodox, thirty-one as Community/Independent, fourteen as Traditional, and one as humanistic. Within these categories there are of course even further variations. Within the Orthodox category eight of the schools are operated by Chabad Lubavitch, ten are yeshivas run for Orthodox men post high-school, and three admit solely female students. There are also schools that offer distinct cultural environments. At least one of the supplementary schools, at the Bathurst Jewish Community Centre, and also the Community/Independent Morris Winchevsky day school, describe themselves as orientated towards *yiddishkeit* and offer primary Yiddish language instruction, whilst in some schools Yiddish is an optional language, and in others, it is not offered at all. The Jewish Russian Community Centre offers both a

Community/Independent day-care and a Russian Jewish day school with branches in five other public schools.

The Jewish educational market place in Toronto is extensive both religiously and culturally, and schools quite obviously strive to establish a niche within it. It must be remembered that as non-Catholic faith schools in Ontario receive no government funding, a Jewish public school education is an expensive enterprise for those parents who choose it, and schools must therefore market the education they provide as a commodity attractive enough to warrant high tuition fees. At the Associated Hebrew Elementary Schools in Toronto, tuition fees for the academic year 2007-8, including a \$500 deposit, stand at \$5,001 for the half-day nursery, \$9,950 for the full day nursery, \$10,700 for grades 1-6 and \$10,950 for grades 7-8, (Associated Hebrew Schools of Toronto 2008) whilst the tuition fee for the Community Hebrew Academy of Toronto High School stand at \$17,150 for 2007-8 (Tanenbaum CHAT 2008: 2). As educational institutions that burden parents with a significant financial commitment, Jewish schools in Ontario endeavor to advertise their strengths in both religious and secular education in order to sell themselves as an attractive option for parents concerned for their children's academic and religious identities. As Weinfeld explains, "Modern Jewish day-schools (excluding those that are ultra-Orthodox) seek to accomplish a dual task. They must provide their students with both a first-rate secular education and a meaningful Jewish education" (2001: 206). Information provided by the schools for the Mercaz's database seek to give a "flavor" of the school's environment, or, seen in a more market savvy light, the school's "branding." The Ahavat Yisrael Hebrew school in York Mills describes its ideology as

“Traditional” and its educational philosophy as seeking to “provide opportunities for Jewish children of all backgrounds to discover the beauty and meaning of their heritage in an enjoyable and creative environment” (Ahavat Yisrael Hebrew School 2006). Beit Rayim Hebrew School, which identifies itself as Conservative, offers the following: “Beit Rayim Hebrew School is devoted to inspiring Jewish children to embrace the knowledge and faith of their heritage. As an egalitarian Conservative school, our goal is to teach girls and boys equally to become educated, committed and ethical members of the Jewish community” (Beit Rayim Hebrew School 2008). Beit Sefer Shaarei-Beth El Religious/Hebrew school, which identifies itself as Reform, proclaims, “Our mission at SBE is to cultivate a lifelong commitment, from our students, families, and community, to Jewish living and values through a strong foundation of Jewish knowledge and experiences” (Beit Sefer Shaarei-Beth El Religious/Hebrew School 2008). The Paul Penner Downtown Jewish day school, which is ideologically Community/Independent “appreciates the diversity of contemporary Jewish life. Our Senior Kindergarten to Grade 8 curriculum presents children with a holistic view of the world, weaving together the Jewish and general facets of their lives. In this highly enriched learning environment, students develop excellent academic skills and a meaningful Jewish identity” (Paul Penna Downtown Jewish Day School 2006). Only seven out of the forty-four Orthodox schools maintain websites. Yeshivat Or Chaim boys school and Ulpanat Orot girls school, two high schools in Toronto with a common philosophy boldly proclaim their religious Zionist orientation: “The philosophy of Yeshivat Or Chaim & Ulpanat Orot is rooted in the traditions of authentic religious Zionism. The schools seek to instil in their students a

deep and abiding love for Medinat Yisrael. Whether planning aliyah or making their lives in North America, students regard Medinat Yisrael as the centre of their spiritual life” (Yeshivat Or, Chaim 2008). Tiferes Bais Yaakov High School for girls, by contrast, maintains a more student-centred approach to Orthodox identity: “In 1999 Tiferes Bais Yaakov opened its doors, offering the young women of our community an intellectually challenging academic environment – *limudei kodesh* and *limudei chol* – within an atmosphere of caring, concern and trust, where each student can reach her full potential and capacity for absorbing a true sense of Torah and *Yiras Shomayim*” (Tiferes Bais Yaakov 2006); whilst the self description provided by Shmuel Zahavy Cheder Chabad is entirely consistent with the wider religious goals of the Chabad Lubavitch movement: “The Shmuel Zahavy Cheder Chabad of Toronto is a school dedicated to raising Jews that care. Besides a comprehensive secular education, our students receive a thorough grounding in Torah scholarship and classic Jewish values. In the renowned spirit of Chabad-Lubavitch, this is enriched by Chassidic warmth, imbuing them with a deep sense of concern and responsibility for others. Our education equips them to grow up as proud, conscientious Jews, with the broad Torah knowledge and strong commitment necessary to develop into Jewish leaders of the future” (Shmuel Zahavy Cheder Chabad 2008).

The most interesting ideological description is provided by the GTA’s sole Humanistic school, run by the Oraynu congregation, whose website’s homepage opens with a series of bold rhetorical questions in a brightly coloured font: “Some Questions to Ponder ... Do you consider yourself a secular or cultural Jew, humanist, agnostic or religious rebel? Is the synagogue experience less meaningful for you? Are you an

intercultural family looking for a Jewish congregation where you can feel *really* connected and welcome? Oraynu offers a modern alternative, a totally “un-orthodox approach” – Humanistic Judaism! We re-define Jewish identity and observance” (Oraynu Congregation for Humanistic Judaism 2008a). Moving on to the home-page of the school we read, in equally bright, bold font: “Looking for a different Jewish school experience for your child? One that focuses on our rich Jewish heritage from a secular, humanistic perspective? Perhaps your child belongs at Oraynu!” (Oraynu Congregation for Humanistic Judaism 2008b).

Whilst the directory provided by the Mercaz is comprehensive in many ways, there are inevitably educational institutions which are not included under its auspices – those which do not meet its requirements to receive its funding as regulated in the Manual of Requirements for Jewish Elementary and Secondary Schools to Obtain and Maintain Tuition and Subsidy Funding (UJA Federation Board of Jewish Education 2007a) or comply with its regulations for affiliation as outlined in the Manual of Requirements for Jewish Elementary and Secondary Schools to Obtain and Maintain Affiliation with the Board of Jewish education (UJA Federation Board of Jewish Education 2007b). The Manual of Requirements for Affiliation is an eight page long document outlining the five requirements which the Mercaz sees as essential for affiliation – Identification with Community, Financial Viability, Educational Quality, Effective Governance and Organizational Structure. Schools must also accept the Mission, Vision and Strategic Goals of the UJA Federation of Greater Toronto (UJA Federation Board of Jewish Education: 2007: 8). Whilst it is difficult to conjecture the numbers and types of schools

which may exist outside of the auspices of the Mercaz, it is realistic to assume that many of the requirements outlined in the documents above would not be met by a variety of ultra-Orthodox schools, who may not see affiliation with a body that also supports less religiously observant institutions as desirable. The existence of the Mercaz as an institution that seeks to unite and standardize the quality and funding of Jewish Schools is reflective, however, of an organizational philosophy that sees Jewish education as a communal responsibility. Whilst this does undermine the autonomy of each school to teach and embody distinct philosophical or religious ideologies, it serves to provide a financial structure to support Jewish schools. As Weinfeld explains: “The emergence of Jewish education, especially day-schools, as perhaps the key – and most costly – element of a Canadian Jewish public agenda poses interesting problems of school independence versus communal control. Traditionally, Jewish schools zealously guard their autonomy, and resist any interference in their decisions by their boards, parents, or administrators. But as costs have risen, and more schools seek assistance from the organized community, the question arises as to what influence the community at large can or should have on education matters” (2001: 207).

The UJA Federation also supports Jewish schools in Ontario outside of the GTA, however, given the smaller number of schools, they do not provide the kind of comprehensive database of schools such as that dedicated to the GTA, but simply lists of schools on the Federation website dedicated to each municipality. The closest parallel to a directory of Jewish schools in wider Ontario exists in the Ontario Ministry of Education’s Directory of Private Schools (2001). The requirements for inclusion in the



directory stand simply at the requirement to file a Notice of Intention to Operate a Private School in accordance with section 16 of the Education Act (2001: i). The directory lists one identifiably Jewish private school in London, five in Ottawa and three in Hamilton, the three largest Jewish communities outside of the GTA. There are clearly some inaccuracies, if not differences in criteria employed by the Federations and the Ontario Ministry of Education in judging what constitutes a place of Jewish education. The websites run by the Federations list fifteen places of Jewish education in Ottawa: one child care centre, three pre-schools, three day schools, three high schools and five supplementary schools (Jewish Federation of Ottawa 2008) - and six places of Jewish education in Hamilton (UJA Federation of Hamilton 2008).

The Ontario Ministry of Education's 2001 directory of private schools lists a total of 633 privately maintained schools. This includes a large number of schools identifiably connected to a number of Christian denominations, notably Baptist, Mennonite and Amish institutions, Islamic schools, Jewish schools both inside and outside of the GTA, and elite private schools. The one religious group that maintains faith-based schools not included in the directory are of course Roman Catholic schools, owing to the fact that they are publicly funded, and therefore considered to be public schools. There are thirty-five Catholic school boards in Ontario responsible for the education of over 600,000 Anglophone students alone, according to the Catholic School Trustee's Association, the advocacy organisation responsible for representing Anglophone Catholic school interests in Ontario (Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association 2007). Advocacy organizations campaigning for the rights of minority religious groups have consistently described the

fact that there are thousands of students who receive a faith-based education from public funds, and a large number for whom faith-based education is an expensive privilege, as an equity issue.

Jewish schools are therefore just one of a number of religious education environments that, unlike Catholic schools, do not receive public funding. I have sought to show that the network of Jewish schools in the Greater Toronto area, and to a lesser extent other urban centres in the province of Ontario, provides an extensive and institutionally complete educational marketplace, and a financially demanding educational option. For some parents however, particularly observant ones, a Jewish education is a matter of necessity, not choice. Yet that necessity entails considerable financial sacrifice, a sacrifice not shared by those Roman Catholic parents in Ontario who are committed to a faith-based education for their children.

### 3.) THESIS STATEMENT.

Having outlined the historical, legal and cultural context of faith-based schooling in Ontario, and the nature and scope of the Jewish school system particularly, this thesis will a) analyse the ways in which arguments for equity in faith-based education funding were constructed by some of the major advocacy organisations within the Ontario Jewish community during the period June-October 2007, and b) discuss how these organisations relate their search to secure equity for faith-based education funding to multiculturalism.

In chapter one, I provide an overview of the different advocacy organisations within the Ontario Jewish community. Secondly, I analyse the ways in which these

organizations, whilst antagonistic in some respects, worked together in 2007 to present education as an election issue. Using both public data from the period and my interviews with members of Jewish advocacy groups, I will, following Scott Davies (1999), suggest that organizations used a common political “frame” to describe why faith-schools should be funded – that of equity in the context of multiculturalism. Since the adoption of multiculturalism as an official Canadian policy in 1971, various legislative reforms have been introduced which constitutionally enshrine the legal and cultural equality of all ethnic groups. Invoking multiculturalism as a justification for funding all faith-schools equally is therefore a frame with substantial political currency.

In chapter two I discuss the use of multiculturalism as a frame for advocating for equity in education funding. I asked my interviewees whether Ontario’s continued adherence to a funding structure developed during Canada’s formative period challenges Ontario’s claim to have rescinded its commitment to bi-culturalism in favour of multiculturalism. All agreed that it did, and that to be consistently multicultural, Ontario cannot afford privileges to one of the charter groups without extending it to minority communities as well. Multiculturalism was therefore understood in this context as a straightforward legal obligation to treat all groups equitably.

Yet whilst multiculturalism was heavily used as a frame by which to justify arguments for equity in education funding by Jewish advocacy organizations, both the public data from the pre-election period and my personal interviews bore witness to a number of misgivings about multiculturalism as a social reality. In chapter three I will suggest that my interviewees were able to negotiate between a “legal multiculturalism”

and a “cost-benefit multiculturalism.” “Legal multiculturalism” refers to the invocation of multiculturalism as a legal obligation upon Ontario to treat all faith groups equitably. Used in this way, multiculturalism is an uncomplicated, black and white legal category, a framework for understanding minority group rights. “Cost-benefit” multiculturalism, on the other hand, situates multiculturalism in terms of a cost-benefit analysis, assessing what a multicultural ideal offers the Jewish community vis-à-vis the public expression of their religious and cultural values, but also questioning whether affording the same privileges to other groups is advantageous.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

In this thesis I analyse how Jewish advocacy organisations construct the issue of equity for faith-school funding in a multicultural Ontario, focusing particularly on the period June-October 2007. My data is therefore comprised of materials and statements produced by a select group of organisations and their employees. The primary source for delineating how different organisations constructed their views on equity for faith-based school funding during this period came from the websites of the relevant organizations. Using online material is always problematic because of its transient nature; however, it was heavily used by these organisations during the pre-election period due to its ability to disseminate information to large numbers of people in a very short time period, and therefore formed a core part of my data. Where possible, I sought to verify online information during personal interviews.

In seeking to ascertain when and how Jewish advocacy organisations spoke about

the issue during the pre-election period, I also analysed media sources in which either members of these organisations had been quoted, or to which they had directly contributed. Where possible, I have utilised radio and television appearances archived through the Canadian Press Newswire, however, much of the media data comes from newspaper sources. The most widely subscribed weekly newspaper of the Ontario Jewish community, the *Canadian Jewish News* (henceforth CJN) was a source for much of my data<sup>4</sup>, as was B'nai Brith's weekly publication, *The Jewish Tribune*. Public newspapers, notably the *Toronto Globe and Mail*, *The Star*, and the *Ottawa Citizen* also provided significant source material.

I use data from the public domain primarily in chapter one, where I discuss the ways in which different organisations constructed arguments for equity in education funding during the period June-October 2007. In chapters two and three, I situate the faith-based school funding arrangement in Ontario in the context of multiculturalism, questioning how employees of these advocacy organisations reconcile Ontario's commitment to multiculturalism with the province's continued commitment to a discriminatory system of faith-school funding. Data for these chapters comes from private interviews with employees of active advocacy organisations. I interviewed representatives from six groups: the Canadian Jewish Congress, B'nai Brith, the Mercaz, the Multi-Faith Coalition, the Ontario Association for Jewish day Schools (OAJDS) and Parents For Equity in Education Funding (PEEF). For reference and orientation I also

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<sup>4</sup> In utilising the *Canadian Jews News* as a major primary source, I am mindful of Lewis Levendal's criticisms of the paper's representative biases described in *The Canadian Jewish News – Newspaper or House Organ?* (1989: 341-466).

interviewed four individuals not connected directly to Jewish advocacy organizations, but who are in some way highly engaged in this debate; these interviews do not form part of my core interviewee data, however.

I identified relevant interviewees by references to them made in press coverage of the faith-based school funding debate, such as quotations and interviews, and pieces written by some of these individuals for both the Jewish and mainstream presses. Advocacy organisations seek to represent constituent communities in the public domain, and it seemed logical, therefore, that the most actively engaged organisations and individuals would be those whose names were referenced most frequently in the public domain. To a large degree, this supposition proved accurate. However, as I shall go on to demonstrate in chapter one, some of the organisations that appear to be distinct are actually connected and centralised. In these cases, the question of which organisation is quoted in the media on matters of faith-based education is not so much a question of which organisation is most engaged in matters of education, but of which organisation takes the role of public spokesman.

This was particularly pertinent in the case of the Canadian Jewish Congress. The Congress runs and operates a subsidiary organisation dedicated to advocate for equity in faith-based school funding, the Public Education Fairness Network. The Congress is also, to quote one of my interviewees, the “advocacy arm” of the Mercaz, the organisation within the Federations that is responsible for organising and co-ordinating community funding for Jewish day schools. So whereas the Mercaz concentrates exclusively on issues of education it is the Congress, the non-education specific body, who will be the

public spokesman for the Federations on issues relating to Jews and education.

The Congress is therefore representative of multiple organisations on matters of Jewish education funding. As an anecdotal illustration of the weight of their representative power I can offer the following: early in the research process I identified a group called the Canadian Jewish Political Affairs Committee, who, according to their website, seek to lobby the Jewish community on issues of political concern, and to raise public awareness of these issues within the Jewish community. Whilst this group seems, as far as I can ascertain, to be distinct from the Congress, when I contacted one of their spokesmen to request permission for an interview, I was told politely that I should direct my enquiries towards the Congress. The Congress was therefore disproportionately represented amongst my interview data: whereas I interviewed one representative from each of the other organisations, I interviewed four people who were in some way connected to the Congress.

The primary methodological problem I faced when transcribing these interviews for inclusion in the thesis lay in the fact that in accordance with my interviewees' wishes, I am able to identify my respondents only by the term "interviewee." This obscures any connection between the organisation and the interviewee, and makes it extremely difficult to understand the context in which many of these quotes were made. However, there was good reason for the request. Interviewees were often very candid during interviews, expressing criticisms of both the government and public policy within Ontario. The desire to remain anonymous was understandable in consideration of the fact that these organisations depend upon good relations with the government for the successful

lobbying of issues pertaining to the Jewish community. Those good relations could be soured, by some of the comments they made during interviews, should they ever come to wider attention. It must also be remembered that there are relatively few organisations engaged in Jewish advocacy in Ontario, and that within these organisations there would only be a small number of personnel working on the issue of faith-based education specifically. This is especially true of the smaller organisations, particularly the ones focusing on equity for faith-based funding alone. Identifying an interviewee's comments with the organisation that they represented could potentially indicate or even reveal his or her identity.

The relative ambiguity of referring to my interviewees solely by the term “interviewee” should, however, be counterbalanced by the fact that ensuring anonymity allowed the discussion to be much more candid. The interview setting provided employees with an anonymous forum in which they could express opinions that they might not convey in their public advocacy. For example, when I asked interviewees to comment on whether multiculturalism was a positive or a negative policy for the Jewish community, they were able to describe a number of misgivings they had about the social realities of multiculturalism. Interviewees were able to tell me about multiculturalism “as it really is,” in the words of one interviewee. The public policy of multiculturalism offers significant monetary advantages for the Jewish community, in terms of grants for heritage projects and the like. Advocacy organisations are therefore unlikely to highlight any misgivings towards multiculturalism in the public domain. In the interview setting, however, interviewees were assured that their views would be represented anonymously.



A number of my interviewees therefore felt able to express misgivings towards multiculturalism that they themselves admitted they would never state publicly.

However, it was often difficult to determine whether interviewees were answering my questions as themselves, or as representatives of the organisation for which they worked. In some cases there were clear distinctions; for example, some interviewees admitted to being personally opposed to extending funding to faith-schools and yet represented organisations committed to extending funding to schools of all faiths. When these interviewees expressed negative opinions on funding faith-schools, it was clear they were speaking for themselves, and vice-versa. In other cases however, this distinction was blurred. Many interviewees may not perceive there to be any distinction between the views they hold as an individual and the views they hold as a member of an advocacy organisation, because each informs the other. Others could have been speaking entirely as themselves, without reference to the views of the organisation for which they worked, or because the views of the organisation mirrored their own personal views.

In some interviews, it was clear that interviewees spoke, or sought to speak, solely on behalf of the organisation they represented. This was evident both in a more controlled manner of discourse, and in a reluctance to answer questions other interviewees were happy to talk about at length. Where some interviewees got enthusiastic and emotionally charged in their answers, these interviewees were more monotone, employed less rhetorical language and offered fewer personal anecdotes. Their answers were shorter, were less detailed, and were they were less likely to expound upon points that I raised. It is accurate to say that these interviewees merely repeated and reiterated the policies that

had been thoroughly delineated by their organisation. They saw the interview setting, therefore, as merely another kind of public domain,

One way of verifying whether an interviewee was ‘towing the party line’ and speaking for the organisation rather than themselves would be to compare whether members of the same organisation gave the same answers to the questions. This was not possible, however, because I was not able to interview multiple members of organisations. There are two principal reasons why I could only do a limited number of interviews. One is that many of these organisations are small, and run on limited budgets with limited staff. In the case of the ‘independent’ organisations (see chapter one) interviewees often represented more than one organisation, and did so not as their full time job, but as a leisure time activity. I conducted more than one interview in a place of work entirely unconnected to Jewish advocacy. In these cases, we could reasonably assume that there would be more of a confluence between an interviewee’s personal views and their advocacy, seeing as these individuals take it upon themselves to found organisations and became involved in advocacy in their leisure time for reasons personal to them.

The second reason is that some organisations demonstrated a desire to control information attributable to them by delineating a single expert to represent the views of the organisation in question. Some individuals therefore referred me to a central spokesman on the education issue when I contacted them. As an illustration of this, we may look again to the Canadian Jewish Congress. After I had conducted my fourth interview with a member of the Congress I received an email from the head of the equity

for faith-school funding campaign, addressed also to all of my interviewees, asking that any requests for information on this issue go through him alone. This was obviously an attempt to streamline and control the information coming out of the Congress.

This email raises interesting questions about how my interviewees saw my role as a researcher. In the eyes of the gentleman in charge of the equity for faith-school funding campaign I, and the thesis I was seeking to produce, was a part of the public domain. In the same way that statements to newspapers and websites had to be carefully crafted, therefore, so the information that I received and would attribute to the Congress had to be controlled. For other interviewees from the Congress, however, I was an outsider who was interested and engaged in an issue they felt passionately about. Furthermore, I was easily identifiable as a non-Canadian national. All of my interviewees were keen to enquire about why a young British female would be interested in Canadian Jewish advocacy. In explaining why I thought their work was an important topic to research, there was a validation of their objectives and their campaign to secure equity in faith-based school funding. Some interviewees were therefore extremely enthusiastic about the interview, seeing it as a chance to describe the injustice they felt, or expound upon the gaping holes in multicultural policy in Ontario to an engaged outsider.

Conducting interviews therefore enabled me to “go behind the advocacy,” to look beyond the carefully crafted statements and letters to the editor, and ask employees of Jewish advocacy organisations what they really thought about funding for faith-based education in the context of multiculturalism in Ontario. As the “experts” in Canadian public policy vis-à-vis the Jewish community, it was interesting to see how members of

these organisations perceive the public policy of multiculturalism functions as a social reality.

It should be noted, however, that confining an analysis of the 2007 faith-based funding debate to the discourse generated by advocacy organisations cannot and will not do justice to the wide range of attitudes to faith-based education that exist within the Jewish community in Ontario. Both the letters pages of the *CJN* and the voter statistics from the October election indicate that there was by no means overwhelming support for the equal faith-based funding proposition proposed by the Progressive Conservative party amongst the Jews of Ontario. The organisations that constitute the focal point of this analysis, however, all advocated for funds to be extended to faith-schools of all denominations. The reason for this partisan stance is understandable if we consider that the mandate of the representative organisations is to influence Canadian public policy so that it benefits the Jewish community. The major representative organisations therefore advocated for extending funding on the basis that funding all faith-based schools would financially benefit Jewish day schools. Their advocacy was driven towards the goal of seeing funding extended, as opposed to representing the wide variety of opinions held by the community at large. Utilising the discourse of the representative organisations as an analytical lens does confine us, therefore, to a very partisan approach to the issue of faith-based education funding in a multicultural Ontario. It cannot and will not make any connections between perceptions of faith-based education and relative degrees of Jewish identity, as much of the literature on faith-based education does.

There are, however, two principal reasons why advocacy organisations provide an

interesting case study for this issue. Firstly, it enables us to analyse an aspect of the interaction between the public policy makers of Ontario and the public policy makers of the Ontario Jewish community with respect to education. And secondly, it allows us to explore the ways in which advocacy organisations, as visible representations of the Jewish community, understand the policy of multiculturalism as a social reality. Advocacy organisations are, supposedly, representative of Jewish interests in Ontario. They are professionally engaged in debating, analysing and campaigning for issues that they perceive to be, or are perceived to be, relevant for the Jewish community. Advocacy organisations therefore present an interesting subject for research because of their representative status - because the views they hold are either representative of the views of a constituent community, or conversely because community members may see the positions espoused by these professional advocates as good positions to espouse themselves.

Analysing how Jewish advocacy organisations communicate issues of faith and public policy to their communities is an exercise in translation. It delineates areas where public policy fails to engage the needs of interests of a religious community, because organizations will communicate these policies in a negative light and lobby for them to be changed. Similarly, it also delineates where public policy is seen to be advantageous to the interests of a community, because advocacy organisations will use the language of these policies within their own discourse. Understanding the way in which Jewish advocacy organisations communicate or translate the public policies of education and multiculturalism is therefore suggestive of the ways in which the community at large will

understand these issues.

#### CHAPTER ONE: “IT’S A MATTER OF FAIRNESS.”

“Who knows whether John Tory and his Conservatives might have won the Ontario election without the promise of public funding for faith-based schools? But the promise was made, and with it, went Mr Tory’s chance of becoming Premier.” So argued one newspaper columnist in the aftermath of the debate, in an explosively titled piece *When you light a match Near a Toxic Mix of Religion and Education* (Simpson 2007). This debate forms an interesting case study for the very fact that it became a debate. Following Tory’s pledge to extend faith-based funding under a Progressive Conservative government, Dalton McGuinty publicly asserted that faith schools were segregationist and that it was only by being in secular public schools that children would be properly socialised. He argued that funding faith-based schools would destroy the public system and bleed away its resources, breed terrorism, disrupt the social order and breed a generation children unable to identify with Canadian values (Wente 2007). One columnist reckoned that McGuinty ran a “highly disciplined and effective campaign by stoking the fires on the school issue” (Howlett 2007), whilst Jeffrey Simpson suggested that “the Liberals framed the issue to their advantage (by) presenting it as a threat to public education and a secular Ontario” (2007). However noble the fairness stance is, Simpson argued, Tory simply did not understand how toxic this issue had the potential to be: “The

Conservatives believed, wrongly, that that the schools issue wasn't that big a deal. They didn't think that Mr McGuinty, a product of the Catholic school system would look terribly credible attacking the Conservative promise.... They did not realise that the more diverse Ontario becomes, the more determined the majority is to oppose what they consider to be public preferences that might further separate or segregate people" (2007).

Jewish organisations advocating for equity for faith-school funding during this period sought both to diffuse the statements made by McGuinty, and to persuade the Jewish community that this was an issue worth voting on. Organisations were forced to respond to McGuinty's accusations in a way that diffused the fear mongering his words promoted, rather than adding fuel to the debate. The way in which they constructed the issue of equity in faith-school funding was therefore essential to the efficacy of their advocacy. Here, I seek to demonstrate that advocacy organisations constructed their arguments using political frames that shifted the focus away from faith schools themselves, and on to the Ontario legislature; namely, the argument that Ontario has a responsibility to treat all groups equitably if it purports to be multicultural.

In this chapter, I will introduce the relevant organisations, and describe the different ways in which they function within the Jewish community. There are a number of latent antagonisms between education advocacy organisations that were born out in both the Jewish press during the pre-election period, and in my interviews. Understanding these antagonisms proved to be crucial to understanding the dynamics of education advocacy in the Jewish community of Ontario.

Secondly, I shall describe how organisations advocated for funding for faith-based

schools during the pre-election period. Whilst there are a number of antagonisms between organisations, Tory's announcement provided them with a common goal around which they could rally: the potential political advancement of their cause, and a defined period of time in which to achieve it. Organisations therefore worked together to publicise equity for faith-based education funding as an election issue, even whilst those antagonisms persisted. Whilst there are many different value concepts that advocates could utilise to describe the benefits of a faith-based education, during this period advocates framed faith-based school funding as an issue of fairness. Using Scott Davies' concept of political "framing" (1999) I shall examine how and why fairness was utilised as a master narrative to justify why faith groups outside of Catholicism should receive funding for their schools.

#### 1. WHO ADVOCATES FOR THE JEWISH COMMUNITY?

Jewish advocacy for equity in faith-based education funding in Ontario began in earnest in 1984, after Conservative Premier William Davies extended funding for Roman Catholic Schools to continue until the end of high school. By extending and entrenching the funding of one minority group alone, Davies provided the platform for advocacy groups in Ontario's minority religious communities to lobby the government on the charge of inequity. The Canadian Jewish Congress created a body specifically for the purpose of advocating on this issue, the Ontario Jewish Association for Equity in Education (OJAE), followed over the years by other bodies created by both the Congress and other organizations to represent the Jewish community specifically, or a



multi-faith orientation in which Jews played an organizational role. When John Tory raised the prospect of making this twenty-five year advocacy issue a political reality, concerned organizations were not, as one interviewee commented, “going to look a gift horse in the mouth.”

In order to understand the various ways in which different organizations advocated for equity in faith-based funding during June-October 2007, it is important to understand who the organizations are, and the different consumer bases they orientate themselves towards. There are three types of groups within Jewish education advocacy in Ontario: national organizations who represent the community on a broad swathe of issues; organizations focused solely on the issue of equity in education; and organizations with a multi-faith orientation. All of these organizations, with some exceptions, essentially seek to advocate the same issue to the same people. There is, therefore, a sense of competitive territory between them, perceptions within organizations that they can advocate for the issue better than others. In interviews, representatives from some of these organizations made a distinction between “establishment” organizations and “independent” organizations. The “independents” believe that the “establishment” are compromised by the fact that they seek to represent the Jewish community on a broad swathe of issues, and are therefore prepared to compromise on education, whereas the independent organizations advocate for education funding alone. Understanding this tension proved to be crucial to delineating who speaks for the community, and the grounds on which they purport to do so.

### i.) National Organizations

The national organizations are those institutions whose consumer base is the Jewish community in Canada as a whole, although they maintain regional offices or bases that deal with regional issues. These organizations are the Congress, B'nai Brith Canada and the Federations. The Congress was inaugurated in 1919 by a group within Montreal who sought to establish an organization that would be representative of both “uptown” and ‘downtown’ Jewish interests and views, and advocate for the Canadian Jewish community as a corporate entity (Nefsky 1984: 75). The Congress was founded during a time when the idea of Canadian national identity was understood in terms of a single ideal - the Two People’s Concept enshrined in the 1867 Constitution Act. This understanding of Canadian identity as a unilaterally articulated concept lent itself to definitions of Canadian Jewish identity that also sought to underscore a single, national, and hyphenated Canadian-Jewish understanding of what it meant to be a Canadian Jew. As Ira Robinson explains: “The Canadian Jewish Congress essentially defined the idea of Canadian Jewry on a dominion wide basis at a time when Canada itself was looking for its independent voice in the world” (Elazar, *et al* 2003: 116). Two factors therefore contributed to the “historical moment” that engendered the formation of the Canadian Jewish Congress on a platform of nationwide representation. Firstly, the political situation in Canada provided a backdrop that supported the notion that “Canadian-ness” (or “Jewish-Canadian-ness”) was a unilateral enterprise. And secondly, the relative unity within the Canadian Jewish population meant that one body, namely the Congress, could realistically hope to represent Jewish interests to the Canadian polity at large.

In recent years, however, “Canadian Jewish communal organizations have proliferated in tandem with the growth of the Jewish population” (Elazar *et al* 2003:116). So whilst “Congress retains the confidence of many in the Jewish community, and is regarded in the non-Jewish world as the legitimate voice of the Canadian Jewish community, there are those nipping at the Congress' heel” (Troper & Weinfeld 1999: 230). As organizations that “compete” for the same national consumer base, the Congress and B’nai Brith have been described as rival organizations (Elazar and Waller 1990:54-55; Waller 2001:156-157).

An example from the pre-election period in which this rivalry can be evinced is in the different ways in which these two organizations described their qualifications for advocating on education in their pre-election statements. The Congress’ *2007 Ontario Election Guide to the Issues*<sup>5</sup> devotes three pages to the subject of faith-based schooling, but begins by identifying the Congress as “the representative of the Jewish community to fellow Ontarians and to government” (Canadian Jewish Congress 2007). Compare this to the opening statement of B’nai Brith Canada’s *Ontario Election Taskforce 2007*: “B’nai Brith Canada is the Jewish community’s foremost human rights agency, operating in this country since 1875...B’nai Brith Canada is the Jewish community’s only independent, self-funded, national organization. Its popular-based grass roots support consists of thousands of Canadian families with diverse backgrounds and interests, empowering the organization to speak on their behalf on key issues of concern to the Jewish community” (B’nai Brith Canada 2007).

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<sup>5</sup> “Supported and Funded by Federations and Combined Jewish Appeal.”

Harold Waller suggests that “B’nai Brith generally has been perceived as more aggressive and forceful in its tactics and more aggressive in terms of substance (whereas) Congress is perceived to prefer quiet diplomacy and lower key approaches to governmental bodies” (2001:161). B’nai Brith consistently underscores human rights and the fight against anti-Semitism as the organization’s *raison d’être* in its promotional material, particularly its website, the home-page of which reads: “B’nai Brith Canada is the independent voice of the Jewish community, representing its interests nationwide to government, NGO’s and the wider Canadian public. Since 1875, it has been respected for its groundbreaking work on matters relating to anti-Semitism, racism and human rights” (B’nai Brith Canada 2008). This *raison d’être* is equally evident in a corporate video posted on B’nai Brith Canada’s website (B’nai Brith Canada 2006). B’nai Brith also publicises an audit of anti-Semitic incidents through its League of Human Rights, and prides itself as being the only organization fully aware of the extent of Canadian anti-Semitism, and thus the only organization equipped to tackle it. In describing their annual publication *The Review of Anti-Semitism in Canada*, the B’nai Brith website reads: “Using graphs and charts, cases of bias against Jews are categorized by both geographical distribution and nature of the incidents...The Audit contains chapters on hate on the Internet, the Nation of Islam in Canada, the Heritage Front, reception of foreign hate broadcasts in Canada, and systemic biases against Jews in this country” (B’nai Brith Canada 2008b). It has been suggested to me by a number of interviewees that one of the ways in which B’nai Brith secures its role in the advocacy marketplace is by “over-interpreting” the extent of anti-Semitism in Canada. As one interviewee stated: “A Jewish

guy happens to get mugged. Is it anti-Semitic? No, it's incidental. But it appears on the audit of anti-Semitic incidents." At the very least, it is clear that when it comes to defining their niche in the advocacy marketplace, B'nai Brith Canada have a very developed understanding of their role and their activism.

The United Jewish Appeal Federations describe themselves as 'the organizational hub of Toronto's Jewish Community' (UJA Federation of Greater Toronto 2008). They represent the local Jewish community Federations across Canada and are the fundraising apparatus of national Jewish institutional bodies like the Congress. Whilst the Federations consider the Congress a "partner organisation" (UJA Federation of Greater Toronto 2008b) a number of my interviewees identified the financial strength of the Federations to be an important factor for understanding the relationship between the two organisations. As one interviewee explained: "Congress is the advocacy arm, the Federation is the providing arm, the fundraising arm. But Federation has a lot more internal clout than Congress does, because Congress is dependent upon its funding ultimately from the fundraising of the Federations." The increasing financial dependency of the Congress upon the Federations is the result of a new funding arrangement created between 2004-2005 in which funding became centralised under an organisation called CIJA. As Ira Robinson explains: "Through its National Budgeting Committee, Federation/UJA Canada has become the prime source of funding for CJC. As always, the power to fund constitutes real power which Federation/UJA Canada has chosen to use. Through its budgetary process, it has succeeded in reducing CJC's budget significantly. Thus, in the past six years, CJC's budget has been cut from approximately \$CDN 3.7 million to less

than \$CDN 3.0 million, with a resulting curtailment of a number of the organization's activities. Indeed, CJC is now practically unable to take any significant action without prior consideration of the position of the Federations on the relevant issues” (1999:1).

Furthermore, the majority of social services have been centralised under the mantle of the Federations, and whilst this undoubtedly suggests a greater efficiency in service provision, one interviewee identified this as a further reason to suggest that the Federations maintain more power than Congress in the public sphere: “The Federations increasingly over the last 50 years have become much more powerful than Congress, because they’ve got money. More powerful because, going back to the pre-war period, a lot of the social services were provided by different agencies and also to a degree by different charities but then it became all centralised and bureaucratised and professionalized, under the Federations.”

#### ii.) Organizations focused specifically on education

The second category of organizations contains those oriented specifically towards education. The educational pillar within the UJA Federations is the Centre for the Enhancement of Jewish Education - the Mercaz. The Mercaz used to be referred to as the Board of Jewish Education, and the re-appellation bears witness to a certain ambiguity in its role, as one interviewee suggested: “The Mercaz is not called a board anymore because it is not a board. It services all the education institutions in the GTA in conjunction with the institutions themselves – the schools. They are private, autonomous, corporate entities... it’s a strange relationship because we’re like a board but we’re not a

board.” As stated in the introduction, the Mercaz represents the majority of, but not all Jewish educational institutions.<sup>6</sup> As my interviewee clarified “There is tremendous diversity in the education spectrum in Toronto. We don’t represent all of them. A significant number of institutions are not affiliated with us, primarily in the haredi sector.” The Mercaz was not at the forefront of the advocacy for faith-based funding during the 2007 election debate, because, as my interviewee suggested to me “we’re not the advocates because we’re what it’s all about. We would not be in the forefront of representative activity. It would be much more appropriate for CJC or Federation to meet with Ministry of Education representatives. There is a sense of an appropriate role, and a sense of conflict. Bring me along to make the case for faith-based funding and that faith-based finding can be a part of multicultural education, yes, but we’re not the forefront of the advocacy.” Furthermore, “We have to tread very carefully with advocacy. We represent lots of parents, parents who are fervently pro public school and parents who are fervently pro private school.” There is therefore a perception that in order to continue to represent this wide spectrum of parental opinion, the Mercaz could not, unlike the CJC or the Federations, advocate strongly on one side of the debate.

The Ontario Association for Jewish Day Schools (OAJDS) was founded in 1990 by a coalition frustrated by the lack of advancement on the cause of equity for faith-based schools by Federation and Congress, with a mandate to explicitly advocate for government funding. As one interviewee stated: “It was talked about for 40 years, going nowhere. Some parents got together, said to themselves ‘this is ridiculous’ and OAJDS

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<sup>6</sup> As I shall later demonstrate, another independent organization, the Ontario Association for Jewish Day Schools, claim to represent more schools than the Mercaz.

was formed.” The advantage of OAJDS over the national organisations that advocate for Jewish community on a wide-range of issues is, according to a letter written to the Canadian Jewish News, that unlike the Federations it “represents all or virtually all of Ontario’s Jewish Day Schools and has the sole focus of obtaining government funding for denominational schools, without the temptation to trade off progress on one issue against stagnation on another” (Landau *et al* 2006). When I asked one interviewee from OAJDS about the difference between his organization and Federations, the reply was a curt “we do something.”

### iii.) Parental/Multi-Faith Bodies

The founding members of the OAJDS were also responsible for the creation of an organization called Parents for Equity in Education Funding (PEEF). PEEF is run by a group of parents along “loose structural lines”, as one interviewee suggested. Whilst I was told that the group was currently engaged in a lawsuit against the Ontario government for their discrimination against children with disabilities in faith-based schools (on the basis that they receive no government subsidies for special needs accommodations) at the time of writing, their website, [www.equalfunding.org](http://www.equalfunding.org), was no longer hosted online.

OAJDS also represents the Jewish community in an organization called The Multi-Faith Coalition of Non-Funded Faith-Based Schools (MFC) – the third organisation created by the founding members of OAJDS and PEEF. The MFC was founded in 2002, and, according to its website, consists of representation from Armenian Orthodox, Coptic



Orthodox, Evangelical Christian, Greek Orthodox, Hindu, Islamic, Sikh (Khalsa), Jewish, Seventh Day Adventist and Mennonite Schools (Multi-Faith Coalition 2007). The Coalition presented the Ontario government with a comprehensive proposal for extending faith-based funding in 2004, and in April 2007 sponsored a school funding symposium entitled “A Multicultural Initiative.”

In September of 2007, during the height of the provincial election campaign period, Congress and the Federations inaugurated another multi-faith group, the Public Education Fairness Network. Representing Armenian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh communities it states “inclusive public education” as its goal. As its website (hosted on the UJA Federations server) describes: “We believe that Inclusive Public Education is the fairest solution to the current situation in which Ontario includes 650,000 children from one faith within public education but excludes 53,000 children who go to other faith-based schools” (Public Education Fairness Network 2008). The Inclusive Education Initiative is committed to a program of principled advocacy, bringing our message to parents, schools, administrators, government and the people of Ontario through a set of five principles” (Public Education Fairness Network 2008b). In an article in the Canadian Jewish News on the subject of the founding of the PEFN, it was suggested that the new organization covered much the same ground as the two other groups dedicated to advocating for equal funding for faith-based schools. A spokesman for the coalition responded that whereas the existing groups represented schools and parents, the PEFN would represent faith communities as a whole, adding that its intention was to “advertise and conduct events among faith groups to demonstrate harmony” (Levy-Ajzenkopf

2007b). An interviewee from the coalition, however, stated that one of the reasons it was formed was in order to provide a “less partisan... less confrontational” multi-faith alternative to the MFC.

#### iv.) Antagonisms between Institutions

There is therefore a sense of competition between different organisations competing for largely the same representative territory, and tensions surrounding who can advocate for the issue most effectively. These tensions were evident during the pre-election period both in the Jewish press, particularly the letters pages of the *CJN*, and also during my interviews about the election campaign with representatives from some of these organisations. A number of interviewees perceived that there was a divide between organisations that are “establishment” and organisations that are “independent.” These interviewees were themselves representative of “independent” organisations. There was a strong presence of “us” and “them” language during these interviews, a very real sense of “insiders” and “outsiders.” For interviewees from the independent organisations, the “establishment” consisted of those organizations with offices in the Lipa Green Building for Jewish Community Services at 4600 Bathurst Street, the “nerve centre of the Toronto Jewish community.” This includes the Congress, the UJA Federations, the Mercaz, Jewish Immigrant Aid Services and the Jewish Family and Child Services, among others. According to one interviewee, “anyone who starts an organisation that is not internal, they don’t like them. They can’t work with anyone outside that building.”

A working example of the antagonisms between these two groups of organisations may be found in a series of articles from May editions of the *Canadian Jewish News*. On May 10th it was reported that the UJA Federations had received a \$15 million grant from the provincial Liberals out of their March budget (Levy-Ajzenkopf 2007a). This percolated a “grassroots debate in the Toronto Jewish community,” according to Levy-Ajzenkopf:

Jewish advocates for equal school funding say they want organizations such as Canadian Jewish Congress (CJC) and UJA Federation of Greater Toronto to use some of the money on more aggressive, public campaigns to pressure the Liberals into softening their position on private school funding, particularly during the run-up to the Oct. 10 provincial election. Some say they're also concerned that the \$15 million may hamstring advocacy efforts by federation and CJC on funding non-Catholic, faith-based schools, saying the money puts the Jewish groups in a conflict of interest. Federation denies this and says the grant is earmarked for ongoing work on the Jewish community campuses in Vaughan, mid-town and downtown that are part of its Jewish Toronto Tomorrow project, as well as other future initiatives (Levy-Ajzenkopf 2007a).

According to critics quoted in the May 10<sup>th</sup> article, the grant, and the way that UJA Federations planned to spend it posed two problems. For Ira Walfish, chair of the Multi-Faith Coalition, spending the grant on the new community campuses simply failed to address “the biggest problem by far in the in the Jewish community – the high cost of tuition fees” (Levy-Ajzenkopf 2007a). Secondly and more vehemently, critics quoted in the article accused the Federations of a dire conflict of interest. By accepting a \$15million handout, they were hardly likely to press the government for more financial assistance in the form of funding for Jewish day schools: “Joseph Adler, a Toronto lawyer and parent with three children in private Jewish school, doesn't think the website [www.fundingfairness.ca] or federation's stated plans go far enough or do anything to remove the optics of a conflict of interest and ensure proper advocacy: ‘I spend tens of

thousands of dollars on my kids' tuition. When I heard about [the grant], I was dumbstruck by the conflict of interest that it would create with UJA Federation,' Adler told The *CJN* last week. 'They talk the talk, but they don't really push the cause. Why would they if they continue to receive funding from the government?'" (Levy-Ajzenkopf 2007a). Federation spokesperson Howard English was also quoted in the article, denying any form of conflict of interest. However, as Alexander Werner of Toronto pointed out in the following week's letters page, "seeking \$15 million grants from the provincial government may not stop UJS Federation and CJC from advocating for fair funding for faith-based schools, as claimed by federation spokesman Howard English, but it clearly dampens their willingness to support the kind of grassroots political action that is needed if such funding is to become a reality" (2007a).

The concerns about a potential conflict of interest articulated here mirror similar points articulated in an article published in the *CJN* in December 2006, back before the issue of a grant for the community centres had been raised. The article, submitted by two members of PEEF, sought to argue that the only way to avoid a conflict of interest within advocacy for funding for faith-based schooling, and thus to move forward on the issue, was to give the lead in advocacy to independent organisations unencumbered by a need to remain on good terms with government officials. The article reads:

Federation and Canadian Jewish congress have been advocating for provincial government funding of non-Catholic faith-based schools for decades, mostly through backroom meetings with government officials. However, such communal bodies deal with the government on a wide variety of issues, and as a result, they are inherently limited as to how aggressive they can be with a government as recalcitrant as the one that's now in place. Strong action, including well-disciplined but forceful protest activities, is needed to persuade the government to extend fair funding. To effectively advance the cause, our communal organizations must work in tandem with, and depend upon, organizations that

don't have such a conflicted, multi-issue relationship with the government (Landau et al 2006).

Similar concerns were expressed during interviews with members of these independent organizations following the 2007 provincial election. Interviewees expressed concern that whilst the Federations played an important fund-raising role in the community, they were not able to prioritise spending, to the detriment of the day schools: “The Federations are very good at raising money for the schools. Their commitment to Jewish education is huge. It’s amazing really. But they haven’t increased funding as schools have grown, and the schools are in lousy shape, tuition is thousands and thousands of dollars, and kids are not going into the day schools.” Furthermore, interviewees articulated a belief that in trying to maintain good terms with government, the “establishment” sacrificed the issue of equity of faith-based school funding, a sacrifice that would not be made by the independent organisations, if advocacy for the issue were handed over to them. As one interviewee described:

In reality, our organisations are about 1000 times more able to actually achieve things... We just care about the cause, not the media opportunities or the representation points. Just the cause. You can't work with the establishment of the Jewish community because they will sacrifice the issue, and we won't. We are not compromised by other issues. The Federation should have been playing the role behind the scenes because they have a conflict of interest. We could have been front and centre, and then we could have taken the flack. But they have to be front and centre in every issue. They do certain things very well. But this issue is not one of them. That is the reality.

These organisations are espousing an identical message – fund faith-based schools - and seeking to have that message heard by the same people. In interviews it was clear

that there were very few ideological differences between them<sup>7</sup> on the subject of faith-based education. All of these organisations thought that education is part of the public trust, and that if Catholic schools are to be funded, then Jewish schools deserved funding too. Conflicts between these organisations therefore exist largely because they compete for the same advocacy territory, to represent the Jewish community on the same issue. Amongst the independent organisations, there is a perception that they could do a better job at advocating for the issue than the “establishment.” Interviewees from the “establishment” however, argued that as the historic leaders of the Jewish community they are at the forefront of representational activity, and are recognised as such by the government. Conflicts exist not because they have different visions of what the Jewish educational marketplace should look like, but because the continued failure for this issue to be resolved has allowed the time for organisations to evolve with the vision that if they advocated better on the issue, they might finally get funding for Jewish schools.

## 2. CONSTRUCTIONS OF EQUITY FOR FAITH-BASED SCHOOLS DURING THE PRE-ELECTION DEBATE

When John Tory announced his intention to extend funding to schools of all faiths, these organizations saw a common goal emerge on the horizon – the potential political advancement of their cause. As the *CJN* reported:

Last week, the leader of Ontario's Progressive Conservative Party, John Tory, announced that if his party forms the next provincial government, he will ‘create an opportunity for non-Catholic, faith-based schools to choose to join the publicly funded education system.’ He added: ‘There are some things on which you have to stand on principle, and in this case, the principle is fairness to people of other faiths.’ With those few but elegantly

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<sup>7</sup> Here I refer to the positions espoused by the organisations rather than individual interviewees, who, as I shall go on to describe, were not all in favour of extending funds to all faith-schools.

expressed words, the leader of Ontario's Opposition acknowledged a historic injustice which the Canadian Jewish Congress, UJA Federation of Greater Toronto, Federation and community leaders in Hamilton and Ottawa, the Ontario Association of Jewish Day Schools, the Multi-Faith Coalition (in Ontario) and countless individual parents of the thousands of children in Ontario day schools have long sought to remedy...UJA Federation spokesperson Howard English told The CJN, 'We believe one of the weaknesses of the struggle we've been waging over 30 years [for education funding] is the mobilization of our own community. And we don't want that weakness to exist again. We're going to be sparing no effort to educate our community and mobilize them on this issue.' At this critical juncture in the fight for fairness in education funding, our major moment of promise, nothing less will do (Anonymous 2007).

The realization of this long-standing advocacy issue for the Jewish community depended on John Tory winning the election. This was therefore a decisive moment for advocates for equity in faith-based funding. As the flyer for a public information meeting sponsored by OAJDS, CJPAC, CJC Ontario and the UJA Federations, printed in the Jewish press implored: "Together, we can change the course of history. Our community stands at a historic crossroad in our four-decade campaign to include faith-based schools, such as Jewish day schools, in the publicly funded education system. Inclusive public education is important for everyone, whether or not you send your child to a Jewish day school. Find out what's at stake and what you can do to change the course of history."<sup>8</sup>

Successful advocacy for faith-schools during this period therefore depended on informing the community about why this was an election issue, and encouraging them to vote upon it. However, charitable organizations in Ontario are prohibited from advocating for a specific candidate, and may speak only on behalf of an issue; in this case, an issue that had been adopted by one specific and easily identifiable candidate. As one interviewee stated: "The problem for us was how to maintain our impartiality because we

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<sup>8</sup> This flyer was handed out at various public information meetings, and also printed in the *Canadian Jewish News*, 26/06/07, p.9 and *The Jewish Tribune*, 28/06/07, p.9

are an advocacy organization that does not take political positions, but we support policy issues. And that's what we decided to do, we decided to support an issue that was adopted, as it turns out, by one political party, but it was an issue that we had been advocating on for close to forty years." Another interviewee was more candid, "Of course we didn't say 'vote for John Tory' but we did say 'support faith-based funding' and the leap isn't a big one to make."

The potential to see John Tory elected, and thus see funding extended to faith-schools of all denominations engendered co-operation between organisations seeking to promote it as an election issue. This is evident in the fact that a number of groups joined forces to campaign and advocate for equity in funding faith-schools. In September the Congress, UJA Federation, and the OAJDS launched a joint public education drive that saw flyers printed in the Jewish press and distributed to Jewish schools during a week-long campaign. A spokesperson from the coalition stated that: "the Federation, OAJDS and CJC planned to distribute brochures to as many synagogues as possible" last week "in order for the issue to be top-of-mind as Yom Kippur arrives" (Levy-Ajzenkopf 2007c). Furthermore, a public information evening to inform the Jewish community about faith-based funding as an election issue was co-sponsored by Congress, the UJA Federation, the Canadian Jewish Political Action Committee (CJPAC), and the OAJDS on July 4<sup>th</sup> (Alphonso 2007). And whilst their advocacy focused more explicitly on supporting John Tory, even B'nai Brith, whose advocacy may be seen at other times to be at odds with that of Congress and the Federations, espoused very similar principals and objectives with regards to faith-based funding as an election issue. As one interviewee commented,



“thankfully it’s been one issue that where B’nai Brith has made comment, they’ve been fairly consistent with the message that we’ve put forward.”

The consistency between the ways in which different organisations constructed equity for faith-based school funding as an election issue was a striking feature of the data from this period. Rather than espousing the value of a faith-based education,<sup>9</sup> organisations consistently framed the argument for extending funding to religions outside of Catholicism as a matter of fairness. Fairness was described as being a Canadian value, and an Ontarian value, and a fundamental right for religious groups in a multicultural Canada. The issue was therefore framed using concepts with substantial political currency.

The political “framing” of equity in faith-based education advocacy has been analysed by Scott Davies (1999) who suggests that contemporary coalitions advocating for faith-based funding in Ontario have, in the recent past, effectively constructed their arguments within targeted “master frames.” The two master frames that advocates most consistently situate their arguments within, he suggests, are equity and multiculturalism. Using these frames allows advocates to “recast their arguments for religious schools to resonate better in the political environment” (1999: 13). Furthermore, it uses terms and concepts that are politically familiar and resonant enough that they would also appeal to the non-religious in society. Davies argues therefore, that in framing the issue in the language of multicultural fairness, advocates move the campaign for equity in faith-

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<sup>9</sup> This is not to say that the benefits of a faith-based education were never explicated, but it remains true that utilising the concept of fairness as a Canadian value effectively obviates justifying Jewish educational values as ‘Canadian.’

school funding out of the religious sphere entirely, recasting it as an issue of political obligation. By invoking the language of multiculturalism, Davies concludes, advocates are able “to place their cause within a much grander principle that lies at the heart of Canadian society. Their cause, when inserted into this frame, claims to embody the very essence of the Canadian federation” (1999: 14).

Davies’ observations in 1999 were undoubtedly mirrored during the 2007 pre-election debate. Advocacy organisations consistently invoked the language of fairness, even against criticisms of faith-schools themselves, and couched their right to be treated fairly in the language of multiculturalism. In the context of the continuing funding of Catholic schools, fairness was a message that was both relatively easy to articulate, and relatively emotive: Ontario claims to be multicultural and yet funds the education of one faith-group to the exclusion of all others, an obvious case of discrimination. As one interviewee commented: “From an advocacy perspective, it’s clear. There’s a central wrong that needs to be righted. There’s an unfairness that needs to be corrected.”

The centrality of fairness within pre-election constructions of equity for faith-school funding can be best illustrated with reference to the week-long public education campaign staged by the Congress to inform the public about the issue. Their adverts were run on television, radio and on the internet, and emphasized that whilst there were 650,000 students in the Catholic system, 53,000 students in other faith schools were “unfairly shut out” of the public system. “That’s just unfair,” the advert read, “Let’s include all faith-based schools in public education. Let’s replace fear with fairness.” In an interview with *The Toronto Globe and Mail* for their coverage of this campaign, Bernie

Farber, Chief Executive Officer of the Congress argued that the sole focus of their advocacy was to be treated fairly, “we only want what’s given to the Catholic community,” he argued. Continuing, he explained how this issue affected relatively few students and relatively few schools: “people are beginning to get the message that this isn’t really an issue of money. It’s an issue of fairness” (Alphonso 2007).

Together with the UJA Federations and OAJDS, Congress also produced a flier for the campaign to be distributed amongst Jewish schools and synagogues in preparation for their week-long public education campaign. The fliers were titled “Public Education Fairness: The Ontario Way. The Canadian Way” and informed parents that, “It’s time to stand up for fairness.” In funding Catholic schools alone, the current arrangement was “an unfair situation,” the flier continued, explaining that “fairness means bringing all faith-schools, including Jewish day schools, into Ontario’s publicly funded school system.”

The slogan adopted by this confederation of organizations for their advocacy “It’s the Ontario Way, It’s the Canadian way” explicitly ties together the idea that fairness is consonant with Canadian and Ontarian multicultural values, and that Canadian values would best be represented if equity for faith-based schooling was introduced. In a press release on 1<sup>st</sup> October B’nai Brith espoused much the same sentiment with a headline “Ontario should not stand as a model for religious discrimination” (B’nai Brith Canada 2007) and in June 14<sup>th</sup>’s *Jewish Tribune*, Frank Diamant, Executive Vice-President of B’nai Brith commented “We welcome John Tory’s pledge for equal funding of Ontario’s faith-based schools as a positive development in ensuring the equal rights of all the peoples of this great province are respected” (Anonymous 2007: 1).

For further illustration we may look to an article penned by Rabbi Reuven P. Bulka, Co-President of the Canadian Jewish Congress, for the *National Post* (Bulka 2007). Entitled “It’s a matter of Fairness,” Rabbi Bulka explains that as a personal friend of Dalton McGuinty, he was particularly disappointed to hear his comments on the “segregationalist” nature of faith schools. He implores his friend that this is a “singular moment to lead by example and suggest your own way to ensure every Ontarian’s interest in the principle of fairness and inclusivity.” Rabbi Bulka directly refutes the assertion that funding faith-schools threatened to destroy Ontario’s social cohesion, questioning, quite rightly, how McGuinty could hold this view in respect of his own patronage of the Roman Catholic system. “It is simply not fair that Catholics, and only Catholics, receive provincial funding for their schools in Ontario,” he concludes.

By framing their constructions of faith-based education funding in terms of equity as opposed to focusing on the values of a faith-based education, Jewish organisations were also being politically diplomatic. Recognising that faith-schools represented a political hot potato, they framed their argument in terms that essentially avoided talking about faith-schools in themselves, focusing instead on the inequity of funding one group to the exclusion of all others. A number of my interviewees commented on experiencing negative public perceptions of faith-based education, but public support for the idea that all faith groups should be treated equally. On the subject of the public awareness campaign that his organisation had conducted prior to the election, one interviewee confirmed that the issue of fairness was one that they found that the public could relate to with much more ease: “What we found was that if you stopped people in the street and

asked them ‘Do you think we should fund Jewish schools?’ their gut reaction was no, more often than not. If you explained that Catholics get funding and other faith groups don’t, people would switch over. The problem is, you know, it takes me a few minutes to explain the issue properly. And in a campaign, it doesn’t sound bite nicely. And I think that was the challenge. But, we were able to raise public consciousness of the issue, we were able to show people that the status quo is unfair.”

However, as one interviewee pointed out, whilst fairness did prove to be an issue that people could empathise with, it tended to stop at the level of recognition. “In terms of our messaging we’ve found that unfairness was a fairly strong mover, unfortunately not strong enough. Really, what I would chalk that up to is that no one would support something that was inherently unfair. However, when you ask them to go the next step and ask them what they would do to rectify the situation, ‘Would you take your tax dollars - notwithstanding the fact that it’s the parents who send their kids to these schools, so their tax dollars - and ask would you devote public resources to fixing this?’ the public ultimately decided not to.”

## CONCLUSION

Latent institutional antagonisms between Jewish advocacy groups were clearly evident within both the public data from this period, and my private interviews with members of different organisations. The ability of the “establishment” to effectively advocate on this issue is challenged by special interest groups who claim that in attempting to represent the Jewish community on a broad swathe of issues, the

“establishment” sacrificed advocacy for equity in faith-school funding. Yet whilst interviewees from the independent organisations making this challenge clearly thought that their uncompromised position made them better advocates on this issue, they were also able to recognise that the establishment is an indigenous feature of the Canadian Jewish experience and therefore a positive one, as long as it realised where its hegemony must end. As one interviewee stated, “a central power in the Jewish community can be very good. We’re looked at as a cohesive community, and that’s good. But what it boils down to is that you have to let go when a group can advocate on an issue better.”

The potential political advancement of this cause at this time also inspired an unusual degree of co-operation between otherwise antagonistic groups. Organizations co-operated in bringing the education issue to public awareness through shared campaigns, and couched their advocacy within the same political “frame.” In advertising parlance, the buzzword of Jewish advocacy for faith-based education funding during the prelude to the 2007 provincial election was “fairness.” Phrasing faith-based education funding in terms of fairness both allowed organisations to work together on a common platform, and also negotiated the tensions evident within public perceptions of faith schools by focusing upon equity rather than education in itself. In so doing, advocacy organisations sought to highlight the incongruity that Ontario professes to be multicultural, whilst privileging one charter group over all others. In this sense, their argument was a persuasive one – Ontario claims to be multicultural, but in practice, affords exclusive privileges to one of the charter groups.

## CHAPTER TWO: “YOU’VE GOT TO PUT YOUR MONEY WHERE YOUR MOUTH IS.”

In chapter one, I outlined the centrality of fairness to Jewish advocacy organisations’ constructions of faith-based education funding during the 2007 provincial election debates. Their advocacy could be framed in terms of equity because, through the Charter of Rights and Freedoms Canada has legally articulated a concept of what it constitutes as “fair” - the equal treatment of all individuals, regardless of culture, ethnicity or religion. Furthermore, in adopting a pioneering policy of multiculturalism, Canada has committed to publicly endorsing the notion of group identities, recognising both that cultural particularity is a positive construction of identity, and committing to preserve those identities through government funding and support.

However, the continued refusal to fund faith-based schools outside of Catholicism represents a critical challenge to Ontario’s adherence to multiculturalism. Canada, under Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, committed to a policy of multiculturalism in 1971; the funding structure for faith-based schooling in Ontario, however, is reflective of a compromise made in 1867 when two groups, the English and the French maintained a bi-cultural hegemony in Canada. Maintaining a system in which one of the charter groups receives funding for their faith-based education to the exclusion of all others suggests that Ontario is committed to historic bi-culturalism rather than multiculturalism.

In this chapter, I will describe how multiculturalism came to be enshrined as official policy in Canada in the 1970’s. Secondly, I will describe how equity in faith-based funding advocates and coalitions within the Jewish community have utilised both

the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Multiculturalism Act to attempt to advance their cause in a legal setting. In these cases, multiculturalism has functioned as a powerful rhetorical tool by which to argue that all groups should be treated equally and that faiths outside of Catholicism should have their schools funded. However, despite the powerful rhetoric these cases have employed, Ontario has consistently refused to readdress the 1867 funding arrangements for funding faith-schools. I therefore asked my interviewees whether Ontario's commitment to multiculturalism is compromised by its education policy, and in the final section, present their answers.

#### 1.) THE ADOPTION OF MULTICULTURALISM IN CANADA

Mazurek and Kach suggest that “a most fruitful way of looking at the evolution of Canadian history – including education history – is to picture that evolution as a continuous struggle between two titans” (1983: 48). The English and the French, a historical power-axis that, as we have seen, underpins the 1867 Constitution Act, dominated early Canadian identity politics. In his seminal *The Vertical Mosaic* (1965) John Porter documented the control that French and English culture wielded over Canadian identity in the 1960's, arguing that the bi-cultural hegemony of the English and the French constituted a standard to which other ethnic groups were expected to assimilate. *The Vertical Mosaic* focused upon the class implications of the French-English power axis, and the effects that this bore upon ethnic occupation stratification, observing that ethnicity served as a barrier to social mobility (1965: 60-103). To rise to the highest



echelons of Canadian society, Porter concluded, one must capitulate to the Canadian ideal: to be truly Canadian was to be “authentically” French/English.<sup>10</sup>

However, the French and English alliance was always an uneasy one, and in 1963 the rise of Quebecois discontent amidst the Quiet Revolution led to the federal establishment of a Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism which sought to establish grounds for greater inclusion of French language and culture in Anglophone Canada. The Commission investigated Quebecois contentions that the purported equality between the two founding nations within Canada was not constitutionally enshrined and was not, therefore, a reality (Burnett 1988:175-80). Volume One of the commission showed that over one third of all Canadians spoke French, and that the majority of Francophones were concentrated in Quebec.<sup>11</sup> With the realisation that the two languages in fact constituted two very different cultures within English Canada, separated regionally, politically and socially, the declaration of Canada as a bilingual nation was enshrined in the Official Languages Act of 1969.

The use of such dualistic language to describe Canadian identity in the late 1960's did not however, go un-challenged. As the gates of immigration opened in Canada after the Second World War, so Canadian ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic plurality multiplied.<sup>12</sup> The growing “Third Force” - groups within Canada who were not

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<sup>10</sup> As Leo Dreidger explains (2001: 425-426) *The Vertical Mosaic* acted as the propadeutic for a considerable debate on class and ethnicity in Canada. Research supporting his conclusions may be found in Clements (1974) and Blishen (1970), whilst an example of a critique of this theory may be found in Darroch (1979)

<sup>11</sup> RCBB 1965:13. Richard Joy later proposed that the Canadian Francophone community constituted a linguistic belt stretching from Sault St Marie to Moncton, in addition to the ‘mother core’ of French Quebec. (Joy 1972)

<sup>12</sup> See the major demographic analyses of Richmond (1967) and Kalbach (1970)

considered “Charter Canadians” (English or French) contested descriptions of Canada in terms of the old bi-culturalism as no longer relevant to the cultural diversity of post-war Canada. As Leo Driedger explains:

To many people, expressions of dualism seemed a continuation of the age-old battle of the colonial British and French nation states, which could think in terms only of unitary sovereignties. Did the multi-ethnicity of Canada not matter? Why should the rights of the charter groups be corrected without hearings given to the rights of others as well? (2001: 428).

The protests of the ‘third force’ led the commission to publish a fourth volume of their report entitled “The Cultural Contribution of the Other Ethnic Groups” expanding the commission’s mandate to investigate not only the relationship between bi-lingual Canada, but to move towards a recognition of the multi-ethnic nature of contemporary Canada as well. As Burnet explains, the commission that had been asked to debate bilingualism and biculturalism actually opened up a second debate on the possibility of broader Canadian pluralism, beyond that enshrined in the British North America Act (1979: 43). On October 8, 1971, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau declared in the House of Commons that Canada would be a “bilingual and multicultural country.” The Trudeau era (1968-1984) saw a flowering of research into Canadian identities and the creation of a ministerial position for Multiculturalism, as well as the publishing of the Commission’s reports. In the years that followed, scholarship on ethnicity and race in Canada flourished, moving away from old notions of bi-culturalism and assimilation, and towards a more nuanced understanding of the place of language, race, religion, culture and ethnicity in the composition of Canada’s multicultural society (Driedger 2001: 429-430).

The legal ratification of Trudeau's 1971 commitment to multiculturalism came in the 1980s. In 1982 the Canadian Constitution was repatriated, to include a Charter of Rights and Freedoms spanning 33 sections. Section 15 guarantees the equality of all individuals before and under the law, whilst section 27 affirms "the multicultural heritage of all Canadians" (Department of Justice Canada 1982). As Douglas Schmeiser, Q.C. explains, "Section 27 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, affirming the multicultural heritage of Canadians, is the constitutional culmination of a political development commencing in the early 1970s" (1987: 167).

In 1988, the legislature passed the Act for the Preservation and Enhancement of Multiculturalism in Canada. The most important section, for our purposes, is Section 3. In language even more direct than the 1982 Constitution Act, it affirms Canada's commitment to recognising that multiculturalism is a Canadian demographic reality, and to preserving cultural diversity (3.1.a). Furthermore, section 3.1.b identifies multiculturalism as a key component of Canadian identity, committing to "recognize and promote the understanding that multiculturalism is a fundamental characteristic of the Canadian heritage and identity and that it provides an invaluable resource in the shaping of Canada's future" (Canadian Heritage 1985). The construction of multiculturalism presented here is not merely a reflection upon a current demographic reality, but a commitment to preserving and supporting a multicultural future. The Act recognizes that the way to ensure a multicultural future is to affirm and strengthen the cultural and ethnic identities and experiences of groups within Canada, stating in 3.1.f a commitment to: "foster the recognition and appreciation of the diverse cultures of Canadian society and

promote the reflection and the evolving expressions of those cultures” (Canadian Heritage 1985).

If one sought to compare the commitment to multiculturalism expressed within the Charter and the Multiculturalism Act, therefore the Multiculturalism Act will be seen to be the more committed of the two. Whilst section 27 of the Charter affirms Canada’s orientation towards a multicultural perspective, and to the enfranchisement of group rights, it only directs a multicultural approach to the Charter and does not in itself constitute an original source of rights and freedoms. Furthermore, the Charter legislates against using its principles to argue against certain extant constitutional legislations. Thus with respect to schools, we read in section 29 “Nothing in this Charter abrogates or derogates from any rights or privileges guaranteed by or under the Constitution of Canada in respect of denominational, separate, or dissentient schools” (Canadian Heritage 1985). The Multiculturalism Act, on the other hand, was drafted more than twenty-five years after Trudeau’s multiculturalism speech, and bears witness to a number of debates concerning how multiculturalism is to be implemented as a policy, and what it should precisely mean. Bernardo Berdichewsky suggests that the Act represents a third stage of multicultural consciousness operative since 1971, explaining:

Without abandoning any of the former goals, the emphasis became more on justice and equality of opportunities and on labour equity for minorities. The artificial power barrier of mainstream versus ethnic was also challenged. With the goal of eliminating this, and transforming multiculturalism from an establishment state ideology to a national one, this ideological trend is not for all Canadians and not only for the so-called ‘ethnics.’ It emphasizes that it is part of our identity as citizens and works to promote human rights, particularly enhancing collective rights, i.e. the rights of social minorities, especially ethnocultural communities and visible minorities (1999: 58).

Berdichewsky suggests that it is important to understand multiculturalism as a socio-political process, changing and developing as it interacts with other facets of human experience (such as human rights and social justice) as opposed to a “state of being” (1999: 58). Understanding multiculturalism in terms of a dynamic process, he argues, also leaves room to explain how and why “the mainstream of Canadian society and its institutions have yet to be multiculturalized” (1999: 58).

## 2. WHAT DID MULTICULTURALISM MEAN FOR JEWISH EQUITY IN FAITH-BASED EDUCATION FUNDING ADVOCACY?

The introduction of the Charter and the adoption of official multiculturalism not only recognised the equality of ethnic, religious and cultural groups, but also determined that group identities were a positive part of “Canadian” identity. As Prime Minister Trudeau stated in 1971, in response to the Royal Commission report:

... there cannot be one cultural policy for Canadians of British and French origin, another for the original peoples and yet a third for all others. For although there are two official languages, there is no official culture, nor does any group take precedence over any other (House of Commons Debates 1971: 8545).

On the basis of the Charter’s commitment to multicultural values and to the equal rights of all ethnic and faith-based groups under law, religious coalitions have sought to indict the government of Ontario on the charge of religious-based discrimination. Dickinson and Dolmage in *Education, Religion and the Courts in Ontario* (1996), detail the endeavours of a coalition of religious advocacy groups who took the Ontario legislation through the provincial and national courts in an attempt to have their

grievances concerning the inequity of faith-based funding heard. The coalition, in *Adler vs Ontario*, fought a legal battle spanning 1991-1996. Their grievance was based upon the central inconsistency between the privileges built into the Constitution Act, and the right of all groups to equity under the law enshrined in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The precedent for legal action on the issue of faith based schooling was set by two earlier cases, *Zylberberg et al vs. Sudbury Board of Education* 1988, and *Elgin County (Canadian Civil Liberties Association v. Ontario [Minister of Education]* 1990). In these cases, the appellants sought respectively the removal of religious exercises, and religious education from the public school system, arguing that their Charter rights to freedom of conscience and religion [2(a)], were violated by the presence of religious instruction in the public school system. In both cases the Court decided that there was a violation of rights, to a reasonable degree, and that previous legislation authorising and recommending religious instruction and education were overridden by the 1982 Charter right to freedom of religion and conscience.

The appellants in *Adler vs. Ontario* claimed that there was a similar violation of their rights to religious freedom and conscience on the basis that the government did not support the expression of their cultural and religious values in an educational setting. Furthermore, they also argued that there was a violation of their Charter right to equal benefit of the law 15(1), on the basis that parents sending their children to Roman Catholic schools enjoyed a substantial financial privilege under law. The Adler appellants, parents who sent their children to Jewish schools in Ontario, sought a

declaration that non-funding of Jewish schools specifically was unconstitutional. Their appeal was eventually dismissed in 1996, on the basis that:

Section 93(1) requires the Ontario government to fund Roman Catholic separate schools fully. The claim that the government's choice to fund Roman Catholic separate schools but not other religious schools contravened the equality provisions of s. 15(1) of the *Charter* should be rejected for two reasons. First, the decision falls "fairly and squarely" within s.29 of the *Charter* which explicitly exempts from *Charter* challenge all rights and privileges "guaranteed" under the Constitution in respect of denominational, separate, or dissentient schools. Second, the decision is nonetheless "immune" from *Charter* review because it was made pursuant to the plenary power in relation to education granted to the provincial legislatures as part of the Confederation compromise. One part of the Constitution cannot be used to interfere with rights protected by a different part of that same document....The distinction made between the Roman Catholic Schools and other religious schools is constitutionally mandated and cannot be made the subject of a *Charter* attack (Adler vs. Ontario 1996).

In short, the court found in favour of the government of Ontario on the basis of section 29 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Section 29 states that the legislation of the Constitution Act vis-à-vis funding for denominational schools could not be made the subject of a Charter based attack. So, even though according to the Charter all cultural and ethnic groups must be considered equal under law, and the funding of Catholic schools represents an inequality, funding arrangements for denominational schools represents a special case and an exemption to Charter values.

Faith-based funding advocacy groups have, since the 1996 ruling, consistently argued that the protection of the Charter group, and the refusal to allow the Charter of Rights and Freedoms to be read against the Constitution Act constitutes a fundamental inequity on the part of the government of Ontario. In 1999, a Jewish Parent, Arie Hollis Waldman, went to the United Nations Human Rights Committee claiming to be a victim of a violation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The deposition reads:

1.2 The author is a father of two school-age children and a member of the Jewish faith who enrolls his children in a private Jewish day school. In the province of Ontario Roman Catholic schools are the only non-secular schools receiving full and direct public funding. Other religious schools must fund through private sources, including the charging of tuition fees.

1.3 In 1994, Mr Waldman paid \$14,050 in tuition fees for his children to attend Bialik Hebrew Day School in Toronto, Ontario. This amount was reduced by a federal tax credit system to \$10,810.89. These tuition fees were paid out of a net household income of \$73,367.26. In addition, the author is required to pay local property taxes to fund a public school system he does not use (United Nations Human Rights Committee 1996).

The defence of the state party (Canada) was based on three premises: i) that the special nature of the Charter groups constituted a justifiable historical anomaly to the provisions of both the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Covenant of Human Rights; ii) that it was reasonable to distinguish between the public nature of Roman Catholic schools and private other faith schools; and iii) that the extension of public funding would be detrimental to the well-being of multicultural Ontario (United Nations Human Rights Committee 1996). The Commission found in favour of Mr Waldman on the following grounds:

10.4 The Committee begins by noting the fact that a distinction enshrined in the Constitution does not render it reasonable and objective. In the instant case, the distinction was made in 1867 to protect the Roman Catholics in Ontario. The material before the Committee does not show that members of the Roman Catholic community or any identifiable section of that community are now in a disadvantaged position compared to those members of the Jewish community that wish to secure the education of their children in religious schools. Accordingly, the Committee rejects the State party's argument that the preferential treatment of Roman Catholic schools is non-discriminatory because of its Constitutional obligation.

10.5 With regard to the State party's argument that it is reasonable to differentiate in the allocation of public funds between private and public schools, the Committee notes that it is not possible for members of religious denominations other than Roman Catholic to have their religious schools incorporated within the public school system... On the basis of the facts before it, the Committee considers that the differences in treatment between Roman Catholic religious schools, which are publicly funded as a distinct part of the public education system, and schools of the author's religion, which are private by necessity, cannot be considered reasonable and objective.

10.6 ... If a State party chooses to provide public funding to religious schools, it should make the funding available without discrimination. This means that providing



funding for the schools of one religious group and not for another must be based on reasonable and objective criteria. In the instant case, the Committee concludes that the material before it does not show that the differential treatment between the Roman Catholic faith and the author's religious denomination is based on such criteria. Consequently there has been a violation of the author's rights under article 26 of the Covenant to equal and effective protection against discrimination. (United Nations Human Rights Committee 1996).

In short, the committee decided that even though the 1867 arrangements were enshrined in the Canadian constitution, it could not be reasonably demonstrated that the historical circumstances engendering the 1867 arrangement - the need to protect a Catholic minority - were still a reality in 1999 (10.4). Secondly, the committee argued that distinguishing between the allocation of funds to private and public establishments was not a reasonable argument on the basis that Ontario affords the privilege of a public designation only to one religious group. (10.5). Finally, the committee argued that if funding were to be provided to faith-schools in Ontario, the only way to protect against religious-based discrimination was to ensure that the granting of funds was consistent – to all, or to none –to demonstrate that there is no preferential treatment for one religious group (10.6).

To date, the legislature of Ontario has not acted upon the UN ruling. In the week in which the UN imposed deadline for legal action on this matter passed, The *Canadian Jewish News* reported that the inaction was a “vindication -- before the entire world -- of the (Jewish community's) long-held view that Ontario's practice of funding separate schools, but not Jewish and other faith-based schools, is unfair and discriminatory” (Csillag 1999). Anne Bayefsky, the legal representative for the appellant decried Ontario's failure to respond to the UN decision as “an embarrassment to Canada” (Csillag 2000) and Keith Landy, then chair of the Ontario region of the Canadian Jewish

Congress, regretted that whilst “Canada has held itself out as a champion of human rights for decades, it’s particularly disappointing to learn it lacks the political will to remove discrimination at home” (Csillag 2000).

Whilst these legal battles to secure equity in faith-based education funding have not, to date, been successful, it is clear that multiculturalism provided coalitions with a powerful rhetorical tool with which to frame constructions of equity. Using the Multiculturalism Act and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, coalitions have been able to point directly to Ontario’s supposed commitment to enfranchising all individuals, and to supporting group identities on an equal basis. In a legal context, therefore, multiculturalism can be invoked as a means by which to argue that by funding one of the Charter groups alone, the government of Ontario is not maintaining Canadian values. By not treating all groups equally, therefore, Ontario is not maintaining its commitment to multiculturalism. Here, multiculturalism has functioned as a straightforward legal category, and an obligation to treat all groups equitably which coalitions have been able to use to enhance their cause.

### 3.) WHAT KIND OF MULTICULTURALISM IS ONTARIO COMMITTED TO?

I raised the question of whether Ontario’s failure to fund schools of all faiths compromised its commitment to multiculturalism with all of my interviewees, to which the answer was a unanimous “yes.” Interviewees were convinced that although Ontario claims to be multicultural, in reality it is committed to upholding bi-culturalism. They held no credence with the argument employed by Ontario that it is simply upholding a commitment made in 1867 that cannot be undone. “It has never sat well with me,” said

one interviewee, “and I’ve said this to the Premier, that in a free and democratic Ontario, that one group, despite the history – and I don’t really buy this, you know, ‘we made a historical bargain and because we made a bargain that’s why we have this situation’ – it’s, and I can use a British term here, it’s bollocks.”

When describing the maintenance of the 1867 compromise in so-called multicultural 2007/8, my interviewees oscillated between tones of incredulity and scorn, all agreeing that the continuing privilege afforded to Catholic schools was fundamentally anachronistic. They considered education to be a “gaping hole” in Ontario’s claim to be the “banner province” of Canadian multiculturalism. As Seymour Epstein, executive vice-President of the Mercaz questioned in his *CJC* column, *Epi on Education*, back in 2003: “Has public school education kept up with Ontario?” He continues, “This great province has become a true mosaic of every culture imaginable, with a representation of a virtual rainbow of ethnicities. Yet the funding structure of our public schools is essentially the same as it was in the BNA [British North America Act] era” (Epstein 2003).

Bi-culturalism, as represented in the BNA is a historic articulation of Canadian identity. For some Canadians, bi-culturalism is a form of traditional identity worth preserving. Whilst all my interviewees agreed that the bi-culturalism inherent in the current funding structure should be overhauled, one interviewee, when I put the notion of “historic identities” to him, was able to identify a parallel between the philosophy behind the 1867 compromise and the contemporary situation, arguing that to extend faith-based funding would be wholly consistent with the Confederation Act policy: “What is it that the Fathers of Confederation were trying to do? They were trying to reach a compromise

solution, they were trying to protect their minorities. That's what they were saying, protect the minorities of the day. By extension, if one want to extend what the Fathers of Confederation were actually saying, had they been making that compromise today, they would have, without doubt in my mind, extended it to the minorities of today. That's the way an expansive multicultural view should be done." His argument is essentially identical to that made by Douglas Schmeiser Q.C., who suggests that funding schools of all denominations would be the only policy that is consistent with the much lauded commitment that Canada has made to multicultural values:

If one were to revamp Canada's school laws to reflect Charter values, one would extend the availability of publicly financed denominational schools to all Canadian provinces. One would make these rights available to any religious group with sufficient numbers and interest to make a separate school system viable... One would have to ensure that all parents would have freedom of choice as to what schools their children attend, and it may well be that the courts will enforce this requirement under present law. To be meaningful, of course all of these rights should be available without penalizing financially those who exercise them (1987: 172).

When I asked this interviewee if there was any credibility to the view that, by maintaining Catholic schools, Ontario was protecting its historical identities, he replied: "This was not about historic identities. This was about faith, and supporting faith groups. You know, Jews are a tiny minority, 13 million in the entire world, we make up less than 1% of the total population of Canada, it's pretty difficult for a minority to maintain its cultural roots without some kind of support, and given the fact that we've articulated ourselves as a multicultural nation, it seems incongruous that we're doing everything in this province to ensure we're not supported."

The inequity of privileging one faith group was, as has been discussed, the pillar of Jewish advocacy for faith-based funding during the 2007 provincial elections, and many

interviewees were keen to raise the issue of minority group rights in the context of multiculturalism. Indeed, going back as far as 2003, at the conclusion of the Adler case, we can see the issue being phrased in these terms. Henry Koschitzky, then chair of the Ontario Association for Equity in Education, said he “had held out hope that our highest court would recognise the glaring inequality of government fully funding one religious school system to the exclusion of all others. Sadly, this did not occur, and the message religious minorities take home is that here in Ontario, all are equal, but some are more equal than others” (Anonymous 1996). Some interviewees expressed incredulity that even despite the fact that Ontario’s human rights violation has been recognised internationally by the UN - and notwithstanding a guarded attitude towards that organization - an arrangement of funding for one religious group over all others still persists. “The UN has censured Ontario twice, and a legitimate committee in the UN too. This is a gaping hole when it comes to multiculturalism,” said one interviewee. In a similar vein, “personally I’m sceptical about UN anything, especially in our community,” said another, “but it is a very powerful statement. And one of the few UN rulings that Canada hasn’t acted upon.”

Interviewees reported that many in the Jewish community saw the UN ruling as a beacon of hope. They did not expect that Canada would renege on an opportunity to cement its commitment to multiculturalism in an international domain. They were, of course, disappointed. One interviewee spoke, for example, about beginning his involvement in faith-based funding advocacy in 1984, believing that an inequity as blatant as this one in a multicultural Canada would soon be resolved: “I thought to myself, this is great, you know, I’ll get this done. I was just married, no kids at the time,

so I thought that by the time my kids go to Jewish day school, we'll have funding in place. That was how naive I was. Now here we are in 2008, my two eldest are in university, my youngest is in high school, and there's still no funding for faith-based schools."

The central issue for my interviewees was one of consistency – that to articulate multicultural values you have to follow through with funding for all cultures. "In 2008, from the perspective of multiculturalism we absolutely deserve to be funded," said one, "it's just ridiculous to argue otherwise. If you're going to be so proud of it as a tenant of Canadian values, you have to ensure it's being observed totally." "It's a human rights issue, it really is," said another interviewee. "You cannot, in 2008, be in a situation where one group is given rights over others. And so you have two choices, you can either take it away from the one group, or give it to the others. You can't be a little bit pregnant on this one." One interviewee articulated the issue in a way that sums up the position espoused by virtually all of my interviewees: that to claim to be multicultural Ontario cannot be content with pleasing rhetoric or surface level policies, but must be committed to a consistent and thorough realisation of enfranchising and supporting all cultural, religious and ethnic groups:

Given the fact that we have articulated ourselves as a multicultural nation, it seems incongruous, that we're doing everything in this province to ensure that we're not supported... Either you have it or you don't have it, you support it or you don't support it, you've got to put your money where your mouth is.'

## CONCLUSION

For my interviewees, both in interviews and in their public advocacy, the issue of funding faith-based schools was about fairness and consistency. By framing their cause in these terms their case is relatively water-tight: Ontario claims to be multicultural and committed to enfranchising groups and individuals regardless of ethnicity, culture or religion, yet the province continues to afford exclusive privileges to one of the Charter groups. Ontario is neither being fair, nor consistent. It is continuing to uphold a bi-cultural policy in a multicultural age.

In this sense the connection between faith-based funding and multiculturalism is clear cut, black and white. Multiculturalism means that you either treat all groups equally either by funding all, or by denying funding to all. Multiculturalism is about enfranchisement for all groups, be those groups ethnic, cultural or religious. If Ontario is to claim to be multicultural, it cannot continue to maintain a bi-cultural arrangement. When I asked my interviewees, “Does Ontario’s failure to fund schools of all faiths compromise its multiculturalism?” their response consistently placed multiculturalism within the analytical framework of equity and enfranchisement - multiculturalism means that they should not be treated differently to the Charter groups. Multiculturalism, as understood in this framework, is not Berdichewski’s dynamic socio-political process but a static legal concept that has to be upheld consistently if it is to have any credibility.

For advocates seeking to campaign for equity in faith-based education funding, therefore, multiculturalism is a two-pronged sword. On the one hand it represents a powerful rhetorical tool with which to construct arguments about equity in education and one that, in the context of this debate, had the advantage of relative neutrality. On the

other hand, my interviewees were unanimous that multiculturalism is not being implemented in Ontario if all faiths are not treated equally. Multiculturalism as an ideal, they argued, should celebrate faith groups for their cultural contributions to a multicultural Canada. By showing no inclination to fund all faith schools equally, however, Ontario seems unwilling to fully realise this ideal within its public policy.



## CHAPTER THREE: THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM.

In response to the question “Does Ontario’s failure to fund schools of all faiths compromise its claim to be multicultural?” my interviewees argued that multiculturalism means treating all religious and cultural groups equitably. To be consistently multicultural, they argued, Ontario should extend funding to faith schools of all religions, and support the cultivation of religious identities. In this chapter however, I demonstrate that the representatives of the Ontario Jewish advocacy organisations that I interviewed also admitted to a number of misgivings about whether it would be advantageous for the Jewish community if Ontario entrenched its multiculturalism by funding schools of all faiths. When talking about funding faith schools in themselves, aside from the issue of fairness, interviewees revealed a number of misgivings about multiculturalism as a policy. They were able to recognise that a realised multiculturalism - one that funds schools of all faiths - might have considerable disadvantages for the Ontario Jewish community.

I suggest here that my interviewees were able to negotiate between two quite different conceptions of multiculturalism: multiculturalism as a legal concept, and multiculturalism as a social reality. As a legal concept, multiculturalism provides the legislative basis for my interviewees to argue that all religious and cultural groups should be treated equitably: if Ontario is to be consistently multicultural it should not only fund Catholic schools but schools of other faiths as well. It is an uncomplicated principle of legal equality. As a social reality, however, multiculturalism is an ambiguous concept. It is

unclear exactly who multiculturalism enfranchises and how exactly it does so. Relative to the Jewish community, multiculturalism also brings both advantages and disadvantages. My interviewees were not only aware of these costs and benefits, but articulated them alongside conceptions of multiculturalism as a legal principle of equality. They seemed to be able to negotiate between two very different understandings of multiculturalism simultaneously.

In this chapter, I will describe some of the ways in which multiculturalism has been problematized and deconstructed in academic literature, and show that my interviewees shared some of these criticisms of multiculturalism as a social policy. Secondly, I will discuss the relationship between religion, education and multiculturalism. I shall demonstrate that even though they advocated for equal funding, my interviewees had a number of reservations about how receiving government funding might adversely affect Jewish education. Furthermore, interviewees raised concerns about the consequences of extending funds to other schools, particularly Islamic schools. I shall suggest, therefore, that whilst interviewees used multiculturalism to argue for equity in faith-based school funding, they maintained a number of misgivings about how beneficial it may be to extend funding to both Jewish schools, and schools of other faiths, and thus realise Ontario's multicultural commitment.

The data that I present within this chapter arose from two questions that I posed to my interviewees. The first was, "Is multiculturalism desirable or possible?" Answers ranged from absolute scepticism towards multiculturalism as a concept, to a strong affirmation of its ideals, with the majority of interviewees occupying the centre ground

and arguing that multiculturalism is desirable, but that its realisation in Ontario is, at best, shallow. The second question was, “Why do you think that the Jewish community did not unanimously support Tory’s proposition?” Interviewees addressed the fact that for some the prospect of publicly funding Jewish day schools was advantageous, and for others in the community it was potentially problematic. In explaining this division, they reflected on the relationship between education and a realised multiculturalism in Ontario. Interviewees were able to argue that a fully realised multiculturalism, as manifested by funding schools of all faiths, had disadvantages both for Jewish schools, and for Ontario more generally, and raised a number of misgivings about extending funding to schools of other faiths.

## 1. DECONSTRUCTING MULTICULTURALISM

Janice Gross Stein has suggested that “Canadians today are proudly multicultural. Along with publicly funded health care, multiculturalism has become part of the ‘sticky stuff’ of Canadian identity” (2006:3). Multiculturalism is a commitment to respecting and protecting diversity as the hallmark of Canadian identity, and to enfranchising all members of the Canadian “mosaic.” As such, it can be understood to be a favourable policy for members of Canada’s ethnic and cultural minority communities. Stuart Schoenfeld reasons that multiculturalism is appealing because it legitimises the maintenance of both an ethnic and a Canadian identity alongside each other, suggesting that: “a multicultural Canada would seem to promote a future in which a Jewish minority would remain a distinct community within Canadian society. Multiculturalism implies a

society where diversity is accepted and encouraged... for Jews who want to be in a modern society without being absorbed by it, a multicultural Canada appears to be an attractive ideal which will let them survive as a minority community in a modern diaspora” (1989:29). Similarly, Michael Brown suggests that multiculturalism brings not only revenue to enhance Canadian Jewish identity, but also the affirmation that one’s Canadian identity can be sought in one’s Jewish identity:

For Jews, multiculturalism has meant, in addition to the university chair, heritage programs in Yiddish and Hebrew paid for by public funds, events such as the annual Jewish book fairs and film festivals held in a number of cities, and Toronto’s Ashkenaz, a biannual celebration of East European Jewish culture, the largest and most successful of its kind in North America... In less concrete terms multiculturalism has also meant increased self-confidence and willingness to speak out on issues of concern to the Jewish community. Multiculturalism in Canada has meant that Jews no longer fall into a constitutional lacuna. Instead, they were full-fledged members of the Canadian polity. In strengthening their own institutions and their own culture, Jews were no longer acting as outsiders but rather, as model Canadians. To be a good Jew was now to be a better Canadian (2007: 2).

Since Trudeau’s commitment to multiculturalism in 1971, however, there has been a proliferation of literature attempting to deconstruct what multiculturalism means in Canada, its implications, and its failings. J.R Mallea (1984: 18) argues that negative reactions to the policy have coalesced around six basic criticisms: 1. That it is contradictory to maintain both a policy of multiculturalism and (only) bilingualism. 2. That the policy makes scant reference to aboriginal rights 3. That the policy lends credence to the idea that Canada’s non-official language groups represent a homogenous element of the population. 4. That the policy is an ambiguous response to poorly defined issues. 5. That the celebration of multiculturalism glosses over the fact that some ethnic communities are considerably less socially and economically mobile than others, and

offers no practical help to support them. And lastly, that the policy in its present reality emphasises style over substance. Authors from Quebec also argue that multiculturalism is a thinly veiled attempt to obfuscate French language rights and to silence Quebecois arguments for independence.

In a variation on Mallea's categorization, Yasmeen Abu-Laban and Davia Stasiulis (1992) group critiques of multiculturalism in Canada by authors outside of Quebec into three categories. First are those authors who suggest that multiculturalism serves assimilationist purposes. Robert Clifton and Lance Robert argue, for example, that multiculturalism supports a kind of "symbolic ethnicity" (1982:91) whilst Howard Brotz (1980) argues that multiculturalism promotes a homogenous culture dominated by a white Christian elite. In Canadian Jewish Studies, this concern is echoed by Stuart Schoenfeld (1989; 1999b 1999c). He fears that multiculturalism seeks to homogenise ethnic groups, warning that the goal to "break down barriers of cultural understanding erode(s) cultural particularity" (1999c: 149). Similarly, he suggests that multiculturalism "promotes intercultural blending" and "threatens sub-cultural allegiance" (1999c: 146), and argues that the idea that Canadians can be grouped together by a single master narrative is, at best, tenuous (1999c: 149).

The second group includes those authors who see multiculturalism as a device to obscure the real needs of Canada's minorities. These authors suggest that multiculturalism in Canada is guilty of cultural relativism, and that it fails to identify and act upon disparities between cultural and ethnic groups. Kogila Moodley argues that multiculturalism in Canada espouses a trivial celebration of cultures that does rough

justice to some of the real social and economic needs of immigrant and minority communities. Multiculturalism is an insubstantial policy that stops at celebrating cultures, she argues, and must be bolstered by a more substantial vision for ethnic and cultural pluralism if it is to effect real equality:

As long as cultural persistence is confused for food, clothes, dance and music, then cultural diversity provides colour to an otherwise mundane monotonous technological society. It even enhances tourism, if one considers how many 'ethnic' restaurants add to the magnificence of the Canadian landscape. As such it proves to be no threat, but on the contrary trivialises, neutralizes and absorbs social and economic inequalities (1983: 326).

Similarly, in "Mosaic Madness," Reginald Bibby argues forcefully that multiculturalism in Canada is guilty of becoming an end unto itself:

When a country like Canada enshrines pluralism through policies such as multiculturalism and bilingualism and the guaranteeing of individual rights, the outcome is co-existence, no more, no less. It's a good start in building a society out of diverse peoples, but there's a danger. If there is no subsequent vision, no national goals, no explicit sense of purpose, pluralism becomes an uninspiring end in itself. Rather than co-existence being the foundation that enables a diverse nation to pursue the best kind of existence possible, coexistence degenerates into a kind of national preoccupation. Pluralism ceases to have a cause. The result: mosaic madness (1990: 103-4).

The third group encapsulates those writers, including the authors, who argue that whilst multiculturalism may have its faults it does benefit Canada's ethnic communities. Abu-Laban and Stasiulis identify an increasing ethnic backlash against multiculturalism, but, nevertheless, maintain that what multiculturalism offers outweighs its limitations. What it offers is, in short, "a more inclusionary political discourse than either liberal individualist or two nations models of Canadian society, providing legitimacy for both the presence and the articulations of ethnic minority collectives" (1992: 367).

Multiculturalism, they suggest, should be valued for its ability to bring ethnic voices to the table.

Yet while there is no doubt that bringing ethnic voices into public discourse is to be construed as positive, a robust multiculturalism should be also be able to set the parameters of the discussion. Stein argues that whilst Canadians have embraced multiculturalism as a proud facet of their identity “there is a sniff of smugness in our celebration of our successes as a multicultural society. That smugness, a culturally sanctioned political correctness, is becoming less acceptable as real divisions creep into the debate about cultural and religious difference” (2006: 3). These “real divisions” which threaten to undermine celebrations of multiculturalism are, she argues, two contemporary forces that emphasize religious particularity, namely, religious orthodoxy and terrorism. She questions whether pluralism can extend to enfranchising religious movements that either deny freedoms to some members of their community, or which threaten harm to others. Using herself as an example, she explains that as a Canadian she is committed to gender equality but attends a synagogue in which, much to her chagrin, she cannot be counted in a minyan. Yet though she argues that the equality of all is a fundamental tenant of Canadian human rights that should be enforced, she also recognises that pluralism means extending to religious and cultural groups the freedom to determine their own identity. A thoroughly realised multiculturalism must be aware of the complexities of this dialogue, and be prepared to ask itself how tolerant tolerance should really be.

What Stein elucidates here is the fact that issues of religion are a gaping hole within multicultural policy. The framework of tolerance enshrined within the Charter and

the Multiculturalism Act provides a foundation for respecting other cultures and traditions as an equal but different “other.” Religion, however, is not always content to exist within the category of the other, as Schoenfeld explains:

Cultural diversity is a somewhat different phenomenon from religious diversity. Cultural diversity can be brought into schools in a framework based on the civic ideas of toleration and the everyday practical relativism of the modern culture. Ideas about the co-existence of multiple cultures, the blending of cultures or cultural change can be invoked to reduce the threat of identity politics dividing students into hostile camps. In contrast, religions usually present themselves to their adherents as the ‘only’ or ‘best’ source of truth’ religious movements often stand in opposition to each other, and they often resist the idea that their beliefs and practices have somehow changed. How can a policy of religious diversity respond to these propositions? Can different absolute truths be taught without teaching hostility, on the one hand, or insincerity, on the other? Can students share each other’s religion in the same spirit that they can be taught to share and appreciate each other’s cultures (1999a: 3)?

The question that necessarily arises therefore, is, “How can multiculturalism account for religious pluralism?” Can it be included under its auspices? To argue that religions are cultures unto themselves is a tenable proposition. Many of the aspects of a “culture” (notwithstanding recognition of the nebulous nature of that term) are present within religious traditions – food, festivals, languages, dress, a calendar, literary traditions – indeed, in terms of twinning religion and culture Judaism may be the religion *par exemplar*. It could therefore be argued that religion can be included within conceptualisations of multiculturalism, if religion is understood as a particular type of culture. Indeed, as we have seen, advocates for equity in faith-based education funding have seen little incongruity in adapting the legal principles of multiculturalism for religious ends. As Schoenfeld describes, “The proposal for parallel state-supported multi-faith education uses rhetoric familiar to any student of Canadian multiculturalism” (1999a).



However, it cannot be denied that issues of religion pose particular challenges to multicultural policies, as described by Stein and Schoenfeld. Religious particularity cannot always fit neatly within policies grounded in concepts of universal equality and cultural relativism. Religious pluralism therefore provides a new challenge for Canadian multiculturalism, and begs the question of whether there should be a separate policy of religious pluralism that is able to engage in a more involved dialogue with some of these tensions. Indeed, as Stein identifies, the growth of religious particularity is a feature of recent years rather than the 1970's; the marrying of religion and multiculturalism is therefore less evolved than that of cultural pluralism in Canada (2006: 3). Whilst that marriage is being debated, however, it seems apparent that a multicultural policy that is not able to negotiate the tensions between religious particularities and the Canadian body politic can only be a shallow one. Whilst religions do pose particularly difficult problems for multicultural policy, a legislature which is, as Stein suggests, content with its "sniff of smugness in our celebration of our successes as a multicultural society" is not committed to a multiculturalism which is robust enough to allow room for religious diversity (2006: 3).

The consensus amongst my interviewees was that multiculturalism in Ontario is an insubstantial policy, content with celebrating ethnic cultures, but afraid of enfranchising religious cultures. When I posed the question: "Is multiculturalism desirable or possible?" some replied with particular disdain. "Multiculturalism is a joke to public policy," said one interviewee, "there's no substance to the word." Another interviewee argued that multiculturalism was a misnomer if politicians were only

prepared to afford religious pluralism token recognition, “given the fact that we have articulated ourselves as a multicultural nation, it seems incongruous that we’re doing everything in this province to ensure that we’re not supported. At least not where it really counts. I can throw a few bucks at a dance troupe and they can dance a *horah*, but that’s not multiculturalism.” Another argued candidly that Canadian celebrations of multiculturalism are indulgent fantasies rather than a reflection of social reality. With reference particularly to the treatment of native Canadians, he argued, “The thing with multiculturalism is that the notion of the mosaic rather than the melting pot appeals tremendously, but the history is rather different. We shouldn’t get too pretentious about our socially acceptable position vis-à-vis multiculturalism.” In the faith-based funding debate the Ontario legislature’s understanding of what multiculturalism connotes was, to at least one interviewee, particularly unpalatable: “I think politicians looked at the glass as being half empty rather than half full. They bastardised the concept of multiculturalism, because if they had believed in a real multiculturalism, in which one would protect and support one’s culture, one’s faith in a multicultural Canada, one would do what’s been done in Quebec, and Alberta, and BC and other places, they would give money to support this.”

One particularly trenchant criticism was that multiculturalism was guilty of cultural relativism, that multiculturalism elevated all cultures to the same level. Whilst my interviewees envisaged a robust multiculturalism as one that is able to sensitively debate the accommodation of religious particularity by the state, they thought that the Ontario legislature was content to simply celebrate “anything ethnic.” As one interviewee argued,

multiculturalism in Ontario “makes anything that comes from any culture equally relevant.” Another suggested that it is an act of “pretending everything is authentic – well, everything that doesn’t come from Dead White European Males.” Similarly, another argued that, “On the commercial level there is a multicultural set-up where it’s apparent that there is a degree of inauthenticity.” Another interviewee used cuisine to explain his point: “You can’t pretend a hamburger is the same as a North Italian meal. That’s cultural relativism gone too far.”

It should be noted that in response to the question “Is multiculturalism desirable or possible” all but one interviewee replied that it was indeed desirable. That interviewee argued that issues should be dealt with on a case by case basis, rather than focusing on an umbrella category like multiculturalism, stating: “I prefer to look at issues and determine is this in the public interest or isn’t it in the public interest. And I resolve the problem that way. I’m not much moved by labels like multiculturalism or anything else. I don’t care what the policy is. What I care about is the question ‘Are we doing the right thing?’ I don’t care about whether it advances this or that policy. Are we doing the right thing? I happen to think that the state of multiculturalism is benefited by a community that is less vulnerable to inter-group tensions. But I don’t lose sleep at night over multiculturalism.”

This individual aside, however, my interviewees’ criticisms of multiculturalism as a social reality, however trenchant, should not be read as a desire for the policy to be overthrown altogether, but rather as a reflection of their frustration at the laudation of multiculturalism alongside the realities of social and public policy. As one interviewee elucidated: “The idea is brilliant, wonderful. But we’ve allowed ourselves to be deceived

into thinking that because it's so fashionable we really are multicultural." Similarly, another argued, "It's absolutely desirable and very possible. It needs a re-think, but it's a great formula. And the mosaic is certainly superior to the melting pot."

The criticisms of multiculturalism demonstrated by my interviewees were not therefore, directed at multiculturalism in itself, as an abstract policy or an ideal, but on the ways in which it was realised by the legislature in public policy, and in terms of how public monies were spent. When I asked them "Is multiculturalism desirable?" they effectively rephrased the question, arguing that it should not be posed in terms of whether multiculturalism is good or bad, but rather what kind of multiculturalism is desirable, and how it is enacted. For the vast majority of my interviewees, multiculturalism was a valuable attempt to enfranchise ethnic voices - if it is done correctly. Indeed, they saw the extension of funding to faith schools as a constituent of realising a truly multicultural Ontario: that by schooling children to be secure in both their Jewish and Canadian identities, a deeper realisation of multiculturalism than merely throwing funding at cultural events could be attained. As one interviewee explained: "I'm convinced that day schools make a well-rounded Canadian. You can't understand the other until you understand yourself. And that's what faith-based funding is all about. Neutral schools aren't the answer to a multicultural non-segregated Ontario. That's not cultural transmission. It's superficial multiculturalism."

## 2. EDUCATION AND MULTICULTURALISM

The second question that I posed to my interviewees was why that of why they thought that some members of the Jewish community might have been opposed to Tory's proposition. Whilst in their public advocacy these organisations espoused a largely homogenous message – that all faith schools should be funded if Ontario is to claim to be multicultural - in response to this question members of these organisations were able to identify a number of disadvantages to extending funding to all faith-schools. Interviewees were thus able to frame multiculturalism, as realised by extending funding to all faith-based schools, in terms of a cost benefit analysis. Here I focus on two of the major themes in their responses: a perceived damage to the mainstream public system, and perceived damages to Jewish schools that could be occasioned by becoming public institutions.

### 2.1 Perceived Damages to the Public System

One of the most consistently articulated explanations to the question of why this issue provoked a debate in the community was that parents with children in mainstream schools, or who maintained an ideological commitment to mainstream schools, believed that funding faith-schools would damage the mainstream institutions. As one interviewee argued, "The real fear was that if you extend funding to the other schools it's going to destroy the public system." An important dimension to this argument was financial. As one interviewee suggested, "I would imagine that a large number of Jews voted against for the precise reason that they didn't want money siphoned out of the public system."

Another explained that the memory of Bill Davies, the Prime Minister who had instituted an education tax credit but who had also drained substantial capital out of the public system, was still fresh. Public schools were still recovering from these cutbacks, he argued, and thus there were fears that diluting funding to extend it to faith-based schools would be a repetition of this experience: “I think the fear was that it would break up the school system. It would cost millions of dollars to do this – and where are you going to get the money?”

Another suggestion was that there was a perception that religion and public education should be kept apart, that school should provide an opportunity for children of all backgrounds to mix, and that extra-curricular time should be spent on religious or cultural education. As one interviewee elucidated: “You also had a feeling that Catholics should not be funded. We should have a secular school system. That you’d teach world religions in the schools, but that the state and religion should be kept apart. And if children want to learn about their faith, then that’s what the synagogues and their families and community organizations are there for. You want to learn about this, that’s what those structures are there for.” Similarly, another interviewee suggested: “I think there’s a real populist movement that’s come out of this election that’s saying you know what, there should just be one big public system, and if you want your own, you have to pay for it, that’s the thinking today.” Another interviewee argued that by funding “special interest schooling” Ontario’s mainstream public school system had the potential to become the lowest grade option. Education would become a market place in which parents would be able to choose a fully funded school of best fit, slowly draining the demographic majority

out of the mainstream system. As he questioned, “If this kind of funding were to escalate and proliferate, at what point might mainstream Protestants start opting out of the public system, and that when sort of public system might we have left?”

Two interviewees took the opportunity to explain why they thought that funding faith-schools would damage the public system. Their arguments bore marked similarities to Dalton McGuinty’s assertions that faith schools segregated religious communities. In making them, these interviewees were not necessarily siding with McGuinty, nor asserting that there was no value to a faith-based education. Rather, they were acknowledging the fact that even though Ontario has multicultural policies it is not harmonious, and that inter-group tensions could perhaps be overcome if children were schooled together. As one interviewee suggested: “The idea that you have young people from various backgrounds working together in the classroom, playing together in the school yard, eating together in the cafeteria, you’re creating a situation where people are acquiring a comfort with diversity that could last a lifetime. There are no guarantees that this will happen, but it provides an opportunity for it to happen.”

Another interviewee criticised the idea that it might be in Ontario’s advantage to encourage people to leave the public system by funding faith-based schools. He argued that despite multiculturalism’s faults, inconsistencies and surface-level limitations, Ontario today is a lot more harmonious than it once was, a development for which he held public schooling to be largely accountable: “In many ways, if we compare today’s Ontario to forty, fifty, sixty years ago, it’s really quite phenomenal. And people might say, ‘Well, why is the public school system responsible for that?’ Well it’s hard to know

exactly how it came about, but it's also hard to believe that this institution hasn't contributed handsomely to that. So many people grew up knowing each other, feeling comfortable with each other. And the prospect of public funding to more religious schools threatens the ability of the public schools to perform its function, because the more funding you have, given the parochial nature of the human condition, it is going to attract more and more people out of the public schools." "My only concern," this interviewee argued, "is that we'd end up with a much less tolerant Ontario. The state of inter-group rapport is very important to the enjoyment of any fundamental freedoms that we have, but that becomes harder and harder to do the more you separate kids at critical ages like that." Another interviewee was more dismissive of perceptions in Ontario that the mainstream system should be protected: "Ontario is much more left wing than the other provinces, much more liberal, and by liberal they believe in a one size fits all system."

## 2.ii Perceptions of Damage to Jewish Schools

One way in which my interviewees were able to situate extending public funding to faith-based schools within a cost-benefit analysis was therefore based on perceptions of damage to the mainstream public system. Another was based on the argument that it would be detrimental for Jewish schools to become public institutions. Some parents "simply don't want their kids in the public system," one interviewee suggested, whilst others made a strong argument that becoming publicly accountable, and therefore publicly funded, would take away the school's right to be discriminatively selective. As



one interviewee explained: “For some Jews who are very committed, whatever that means, and even for some who had kids in the schools, they felt that this was not a strong move. Why? Well, there’s a few reasons. One is that you don’t know what you’re asking for. Would funding be granted, then look at the can of worms that it opens. You’ve got inspectors coming into the schools to make sure they’re not outside of the bounds of the curriculum, and you’re opening yourself to the possibility of teachers that you don’t want applying to the job, and you have to consider them, because you’re discriminating otherwise, whether they’re Jewish or non-Jewish.”<sup>13</sup>

Reservations or misgivings about whether Jewish schools could, or would want to maintain the standards set by the Ontario Board of Education if they became public were raised by a number of interviewees. There were particular doubts about whether haredi schools within the community would be able to meet those standards. Furthermore, some interviewees raised some concerns that the requirement to hire only certified teachers would be problematic for Jewish schools. “Right now,” one interviewee explained, “you want a Hebrew teacher, there’s plenty of *yordim* in the community looking for work. But you couldn’t do that if the schools were public.” Other interviewees argued that secular teacher training colleges simply would not provide the training needed to teach in a religious environment.

An important concern for my interviewees was therefore that making Jewish schools public institutions had the potential to make them less Jewish. Two interviewees

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<sup>13</sup> Another interviewee, when I raised this point, made the interesting counter-argument that even today Jewish schools with religious inclinations would in some circumstances hire non-Jews over Jews. As he explained, “If the choice came down to a secular Jew or a shiksa, they’d choose the shiksa. A secular Jew provides the kids with an alternative definition for identity.” His point, therefore, was that the kind of teachers schools hired depended more on the orientation of the school than where the funding came from.

suggested that using Catholic schools as a basis for arguing that faith schools should receive funding might not be a helpful parallel due to the fact that Catholic schools are not as Catholic as Jewish schools are Jewish. As one argued: “so people see that Catholic schools receive funding and they recognise the unfairness there. However, Catholic schools do follow the Ontario curriculum. They’re allowed to discriminate by only hiring Catholic teachers, however, they have to be licensed and certified Ontario teachers. They teach evolution. The only part where the church holds any sway over the curriculum is that they’re allowed to hold services, and on matters of moral instruction you’re allowed to teach Catholic teachings. You won’t learn about abortion in sex-ed class but you will have sex-ed.”

Another interviewee argued that making Jewish schools into public institutions would limit the amount of Jewish content in their students’ education. “I’m not in favour of government assistance to anything other than general studies,” he argued. “Government aid comes with government control, so it’s all very nice to say we want government aid, but when it comes down to the nitty gritty, it has consequences.” The consequence, as he saw it, would be to challenge “integrated learning,” using concepts from Jewish tradition to explain principles in general studies, such as illustrating sound with the example of a shofar. His concern was that making a Jewish school into a public institution would enable the government to “dictate our curriculum, and change who we are.” “The problem about teaching about Jewish education to outsiders” he suggested, ‘is that they see it as an added component. It’s not geography.’”

Asking my interviewees to explain why some members of the community may look negatively upon the proposal to extend public funding to faith-based schools therefore yielded a number of interesting responses. Interviewees combined their own views with reflections on why some sections of the Jewish community might want to retain private funding. Here I have focused on two of the major themes, perceived damage to the mainstream public system, and perceived damage to Jewish schools. In my final section, I shall discuss the third major response to this question.

### 3. FUNDING OTHER FAITH-BASED SCHOOLS

The final set of responses to my question, “Why was there opposition to/debate about this issue?” focused on some of the other faith schools that would have received funding if John Tory had been elected. Critics perceived these schools to be either at odds with, or a threat to Canadian values and freedoms, my interviews explained. They disseminate ideologies that the public of Ontario, as well as some members of the Jewish community did not want to see publicly endorsed or financed.

The first set of schools that interviewees identified as raising concerns were ultra-orthodox Jewish schools. As one interviewee elucidated: “Another reason that people within the community were opposed to funding was that they didn’t want the public to fund schools which, shall we say, are inward looking. Schools who take a very strict orthodox line, that, shall we say, look very unkindly at Christians and Muslims, that take a very strict line to the Torah, that they would be funded. Some teachers perhaps that take a very hard right approach to Israel, and how that gets transmitted to the students. And

they would be funded.”

Another interviewee elucidated at length why he thought that some members of the Jewish community would not want to see funding extended to these schools. As he saw it, the problem was that “people are not as liberal as they think they are.” He suggested that it would have been those members of the community most likely to stand up for multiculturalism and tolerance that would have opposed extending funding to these schools. “Many times you find people who espouse multiculturalism,” he suggested, “but in practice, all their prejudices come out.” In his opinion, the faith-based education funding debate was precisely such a practice, one that allowed the prejudices against certain religious groups to be exposed, as well as the prejudices of the Jewish community against certain elements from within. As he explained, “the problem with pluralism – the Jewish equivalent of multiculturalism – is the question of how to tolerate the intolerant.” In this sense, “intolerant” works on two levels. Firstly, there is the religious right, those who define their identity based on a particular standard of religious observance; and secondly, there are those who claim to be tolerant of all, but in reality are tolerant of all but the religiously observant. To illustrate his point, he used the following anecdote:

So you have Rav Avraham Twersky, you know, the chasidisch rebbe, and he’s on a bus or something, and this irate Jew comes up to him and says ‘Why are you dressed like that?! It’s medieval, what’s the matter with you? You’re making us look bad.’ And Rav Twersky remains calm and says ‘My apologies but I am Amish, my people have dressed like this for centuries.’ ‘My sincere apologies’ the man replies, ‘I have nothing but respect for your cultures and traditions.’ ‘Well actually no,’ Rav Twersky replies, ‘I’m Jewish, and you should respect in your own tradition what you respect in others.’

This interviewee could fully appreciate why the proposal to fund ultra-Orthodox schools would raise concerns for some members of the community. However, he also recognised

that a coherent and robust pluralism means enfranchising those who embody an alternative definition of your own identity with the same rights that you extend to those who you label as “other.” Those that spoke up for multiculturalism but opposed extending funding to ultra-Orthodox schools, he argued, were not practising what they preached.

For the majority of my interviewees however, the reason why the debate became so heated was not because of ultra-orthodox Jewish schools, but Islamic ones. As one interviewee elucidated:

I think another reason why there was such a debate, and this is not only for the Jewish community but for the province as well, is the fear of the madrasas. One has to, I think, be very clear. It was the elephant in the room that no one spoke about. The liberals weren't going to say anything, but the codes, I think, were very clear. We're going to be funding the next generation of terrorists.

For this interviewee, anxiety over funding madrasas was the fuel stoking the debate over faith-based funding. Another interviewee described concerns over radical Islamic schools as the “base fear” underlying opposition to extending faith-based funding. He described it as a “911 syndrome” that prejudiced the public against supporting or endorsing any form of religious particularity, but particularly Islamic particularity. “People are afraid of the religious now,” he said, suggesting that a large part of the opposition to faith-based school funding arose from a desire to keep “potential terrorists” out of an environment where they could be steeped in radical views.

A counter-argument to this assertion was raised by a number of interviewees, who suggested that it would be advantageous to bring religious schools into the public system where they would be subject to government inspections and curriculum requirements. As one confessed: “I would rather have the radical Muslims sat in publicly funded schools

being moderated, I will frankly admit.” This position was also espoused in a *CJN* article written by David Koschitzky, Vice-Chair of UJA Federation of Greater Toronto, and Shaken Mirakian, a member of Ontario’s Armenian community. In “Inclusion: The answer to Faith-Based Extremism,” they acknowledge that “some members of the Jewish community are worried about the possibility of extremist teachings in faith-based schools.” They argue, however, that faith-schools are an established part of religious life in Ontario, and that it would be better to bring them into the public system where they could be regulated, rather than wishing they didn’t exist (Koschitzky et al 2007). One interviewee talked about this article, acknowledging their argument, but admitting that he was more sceptical, arguing from personal experience that the retort that public schools are regulated was not a realistic one:

It’s an extreme view [that we’re funding the next generation of terrorists] but it’s not a view that was held by the extreme margin of the population, it was a view that was held by a lot of people. In fact it was even held by those people in the Jewish community who supported public funding for religious schools. Their response would be that this is going to be better because the madrasas are going to be under the control of the ministry, to which the naysayers would say ‘give me a break, you’d have to have an army of inspectors going through schools all the time to make sure that the curriculum was being followed.’ I taught high school for fifteen years. I never once saw an inspector. I never even heard one coming through our department to see what we were doing.

That the question of whether fundamental Islamic schools should be funded and regulated was an explosive election issue can be illustrated with reference to a series of heated submissions to the letters pages of the *CJN* from August/September 2007. On August 30<sup>th</sup>, a certain A. Margel of Thornhill wrote a letter in which he argued that the debate over whether to fund faith-based schools was “wrong-headed.” “The Ontario Jewish community will not benefit from the funding of faith-based schools,” he argued.

“Such funding will produce home grown Jew, Christian and Hindu hating jihad spouting fanatics at public expense. Jewish education would be much better served by concentrating on vastly improving afternoon Hebrew schools” (Margel 2007). What is interesting here is that the author assumes that it is only Islamic schools that are in danger of producing students with an insular mindset, so-called “jihad spouting fanatics,” and that students educated in such an environment would inevitably develop a hatred of other faiths. The next week Ira Walfish, Chair of the Multi-Faith Coalition for Equal Funding for Faith-Based Schools wrote a letter in response in which he argued that Margel and others were misinformed on the issue, and advised the public to attend a meeting that was being organised to inform the Jewish community about faith-based funding as an election issue (Walfish 2007a). The next week, A. Margel responded: “Clearly [Walfish] refuses to acknowledge there is an important issue being ignored when it comes to the demand for provincial funding for all faith-based schools in Ontario. It is an unpleasant business, but it needs to be addressed. Have a good look at many of the ‘partners’ that he and the Jewish community are making in common cause with its quest for full provincial funding. The question is, will these partners be teaching their children *tikkun olam*, or will they be teaching them *jihad*? What might be the impact on Ontario’s Jewish community if the imams who now receive their salaries and instructions from Arabia were also to control an enlarged, publicly funded school system. This is an issue that too few people want to talk about in the Jewish community. This issue will not go away simply because it is ignored” (Margel 2007b). Similar concerns were also expressed in another letter that week (Hart 2007). The next week Walfish responded again, arguing that these fears

would be assuaged if Muslim schools became publicly accountable, saying: “Margel has it backwards. The issue of some Muslim schools receiving money from outside of Canada and lack of accountability are both more of a threat when these schools are outside the public system” (Walfish 2007 b). Similarly, Stewart Lewis, Executive Director of the Ontario Association of Jewish Day Schools wrote that week: “A Margel is right that proper regulation of faith-based schools is a concern but wrong that withholding funding is an effective solution... When a school is not receiving funding it is difficult to regulate what is taught. The extension of funding allows requirements to be imposed as a condition of funding. Local funding and accompanying regulation would address Margel’s concerns” (Lewis 2007).

Whilst in their public advocacy they sought to ensure that the timbre of the debate was centred on fairness for all faiths, my interviewees were convinced that the reasons that funding for faith-based schools became such a controversial issue was not because the public did not agree that faiths should be treated equally. The reason the debate became so heated was not really because of Jewish schools at all, they argued. “The complicating factors were the madrasas and the fundamental Christian right,” one interviewee argued, “Jews are the easiest to swallow in terms of the public domain – the opposition to faith-based funding wasn’t really about Jews at all.” “This was interesting in the sense that generally one would think that if one were going to attack minority communities, historically the Jewish community tends to take the brunt of these things,” another interviewee pointed out. “However, in this case it was merely collateral damage. There was an awful lot of anger directed at Muslim schools, and to a lesser extent



evangelical Christian schools.”

My interviewees were keen to impress upon me that this was what the faith-based funding debate was *really* about. Whilst they recognised that for some mainstream public education and a perceived detriment to Jewish schools are important issues to consider, four of my interviewees independently described the issue of the madrasas in precisely the same terms, as “the elephant in the room.” Whether or not it was made explicit in public discourse, or whether it was masked in other forms, criticisms of extending funding to faith-based schools were really about the issue of funding Islamic schools. As one interviewee suggested, criticisms of faith-based education took the form they did because “it was more comfortable to side with public education than it was to side with the *Muslims*, that was the secret word out there.” And, in their opinion, the Liberal party had stoked these base fears in order to add fuel to the debate, and thus belittle Tory’s policy to extend funding to faith-based schools. As one of my interviewees concluded, “the Liberals used fear to win the election.”

## CONCLUSION

Both in their public advocacy, and in their responses to my question, “Does the failure to fund schools of all faiths compromise Ontario’s claim to be multicultural?” my interviewees conceptualised multiculturalism as an uncomplicated principle of legal equality. Multiculturalism says that all groups should be treated equitably, so that if Catholic schools are to receive funding, other faith-schools should too. Furthermore, interviewees were also able to argue that endorsing faith schools would bolster

multiculturalism in Ontario, since faith-schooling produces students with a strong understanding of both their religious and their Canadian identities.

In response to the questions “Is multiculturalism desirable or possible?” and “Why do you think that this debate became so heated?” however, interviewees were able to highlight some of the limitations, disadvantages and superficialities of multiculturalism in Ontario. They were able to frame multiculturalism in terms of a cost-benefit analysis, and to realise both where it can be advantageous, and also where its disadvantages lie. Furthermore, they were able to articulate some of the reasons why the proposal to fund faith-based schools was perceived to have been detrimental. These include: that it would have damaged the public system; that it would have been disadvantageous to Jewish schools; and that it would have extended public funding and public endorsement to schools that might not endorse “Canadian values.” According to my interviewees, the schools that may have been thought to fit into this category were ultra-Orthodox Jewish schools and right-wing religious schools of other faiths, particularly Islamic schools.

The answers to these questions, when positioned alongside the responses to the question “Does the failure to fund schools of all faiths compromise Ontario’s commitment to multiculturalism?” discussed in chapter two, suggest that the employees of the advocacy organisations that I interviewed were able to maintain two different constructions of multiculturalism alongside each other. On the one hand, they use the language and legal framework of multiculturalism to argue that all faith groups should be treated equally. By this logic, if the government is committed to both multicultural equality and to funding Catholic schools, then schools of other faiths deserve funding as

well. On the other hand, interviewees recognised that realising this ideal, and extending funding to all faith-schools, had the potential to be disadvantageous to the Jewish community.

The most candid criticisms of extending funding to faith-schools of all religions came in response to the question “Why do you think that the Jewish community did not unanimously support Tory’s proposition?” Whilst interviewees for the most part ascribed their answers to dominant perceptions within the Jewish community as a whole, some also inserted their own views into their answers, admitting to personal reservations about the potential damage to Jewish schools, and the potential negative ramifications of funding Islamic schools. It is difficult to know exactly how many interviewees who did not use the first person plural in their answers personally shared some of the misgivings they ascribed to the community as a whole, but the fact that some admitted to doing so is certainly suggestive.

It would therefore be appropriate to conclude that Jewish advocacy organisations relate most favourably to multiculturalism in the context of enfranchisement, as a legal framework for protecting the rights of Jews in Ontario as a minority religious group. In answer to the question, “Is multiculturalism desirable or possible?” interviewees concluded unanimously that it was indeed desirable. They also pointed out, however, that as a social reality multiculturalism was insubstantial. They argued that the policy of multiculturalism, as it was currently conceived in Ontario, was not willing to recognise that a strong sense of religious identity could be consonant with the ideals of cultural heritage and identity that multiculturalism promotes. A fully realised multiculturalism,

they suggested, would recognise that a religious identity could also be a proudly Canadian identity, and support schools that would teach both of these identities alongside each other. However, when I asked interviewees to explain why some members of the Jewish community might judge extending funding to faith-schools to be undesirable, their answers, particularly those relating to Islamic schools, suggested that there were some kinds of religious identities that should not be promoted. Whilst criticising the government of Ontario for its limited conception of how religious identities could contribute to a multicultural Canada, therefore, their multicultural vision clearly had boundaries of its own.

## CONCLUSION

The proposal to extend funding to faith schools of all religions became the dominant issue of the 2007 Ontario provincial election. For all of my interviewees, this was wholly regrettable. “The election was a total disaster,” one stated. “No politician will touch this for G-d knows how long. Ontarians rejected this issue.” “(Former Prime Minister) Kim Campbell said that an election campaign is no time to discuss issues. And you know what, she was right,” suggested another. “During a thirty day election campaign, to discuss an issue like this? It was not the right time, it was only used for political expediency.”

Whilst they recognised that if it had been successful, Tory’s proposal could have seen the cause they had spent forty years fighting for made a political reality, interviewees also acknowledged that as a result of the heated public opposition to his pledge, the issue of equity for faith-based education funding became a political black-hole. “This issue is now going to be toxic from a political standpoint” one interviewee commented. Others stated that their organisations had been forced to re-evaluate their policies on education. “We’re now in a position where we’re taking another step back and trying to refine our message and trying to figure out what the next step is to move forward,” one interviewee explained. “We know this won’t be an election issue again,” explained another, “but the feeling is that we can’t drop it. There is a community of support who are very invested in the issue. We have to look for different avenues for advocacy.”

In their advocacy during the period June-October 2007, Jewish organisations

consistently constructed the question of why funding should be extended to faith-based schools in terms of fairness. This was possible because the government of Ontario continues to uphold the mandate of the 1867 Constitution Act to fund the schools of the Catholic religious minority. Whereas other provinces have reinterpreted this legislation to reflect the multicultural environment of contemporary Canada, and expanded the concept of a religious minority to include all faith groups outside of Roman Catholic Christianity, Ontario continues to fund Catholic schools alone. Advocacy organisations are therefore able to persuasively argue that Ontario's commitment to equality for all cultural groups is shallow and inconsistent, on the basis that it continues to afford privileges to one of the charter groups alone.

One way in which advocacy organisations understand and relate to multiculturalism is therefore as a policy commitment to treating all groups equally. By privileging Catholic schools over schools of other faiths, they argue, Ontario fails to maintain its multicultural commitment. As Scott Davies (1999) has suggested, faith-school funding advocates invoke multiculturalism as a "frame" to construct arguments that faith groups should be treated fairly. Whilst these arguments employ terms with persuasive political currency, however, focusing on fairness obviates the argument that faith schools should be funded because of the value of a faith-based education. It would be convincing to argue that a Canada that values the cultural heritage of its citizens should value the religious identities of its citizens, on the basis that a religion is a kind of "culture." However, arguments that espoused the value of a faith-based education were not prominent within Jewish advocacy during June-October 2007. The "master frame" of fairness avoided any discussion of

faith-schools as places of education, focusing on extending financial equity to faith groups.

In their public advocacy, Jewish organisations consistently argued that faith-schools should be government funded, employing multiculturalism to argue that all faith groups should be treated equitably. In interviews, I asked representatives of these organisations whether multiculturalism (as represented by funding schools of all faiths) was desirable or possible. They argued that multiculturalism was a desirable ideal on the basis that it sought to acknowledge ethnic and cultural minorities, but that multiculturalism in Ontario is insubstantial and superficial. Multiculturalism in Ontario is guilty of cultural relativism, one interviewee suggested, whilst a number argued, as Janice Gross Stein (2006), that Ontario was content with merely celebrating ethnic cultures, when it should be negotiating how minorities could be more consistently enfranchised. A realised multiculturalism, interviewees suggested, would see a religious identity as a favourable kind of Canadian identity. At the very least, it would be able to open multicultural discourse to begin a dialogue with religions and the religious.

In response to the question “Why did John Tory’s proposition arouse opposition within the Jewish community?” however, interviewees expressed certain doubts about whether a multiculturalism realised by extending funding to faith schools would be advantageous to the Jewish community. They reflected on a number of misgivings within the Jewish community towards publicly supporting perceived “inward looking” religious schools – namely ultra-Orthodox Jewish schools and Islamic schools. Although it was difficult to ascertain whether interviewees were reflecting solely on perceptions within the

Jewish community, a number of interviewees responded to this question by explaining why they personally had misgivings about funding certain schools. So whilst on the one hand multiculturalism was seen as a constructive frame for arguing that faith-groups should be treated equally, and as an imperfect but desirable policy, when it came to actually discussing faith-schools in themselves, interviewees were less optimistic about the realisation of multiculturalism.

My interviewees seemed to see no inconsistency in holding these two constructions of multiculturalism alongside each other. This may have something to tell us, therefore, about the ways in which religious advocacy groups respond to and utilise understandings of pluralism to advance their own causes. Jewish advocacy organisations advocated in favour of extending funding to faith-schools because high tuition fees impose a significant financial burden upon parents for whom a faith-based education may be a matter of necessity, rather than choice. They exist to advocate for the interests of the Jewish community, and this issue was, obviously, a matter of significant financial interest. Although interviewees were able to recognise some of the disadvantages of funding all faith-schools therefore, the financial benefits of realising equity for faith-school funding was seen to outweigh these limitations.

The nature and the extent to which advocacy organisations are prepared to protest cases of discrimination like the funding arrangement for faith-based schools is suggestive of the ways in which the community they advocate for will judge their ability to represent their interests. That a grant for a new Jewish community centre was proffered at the apex of the debate over funding faith-schools suggests that the government sees only certain



kinds of religious community institutions as worthy of public support. If the hierarchies of the community accept funding for such projects when the glaring inequity of public funding for Catholic schools alone persists unabated, then community leaders effectively allow the government to determine what constitutes an acceptable kind of religious institution.

Advocacy organisations provide an interesting case study because the way in which they understand and construct policy issues is reflective of the way that they will be communicated to the community they represent. As a concluding remark therefore, it may be constructive to reflect upon what this data suggests about the ways in which these organisations will communicate the relationship between faith-based education and multiculturalism to the Jewish community in Ontario. The most consistent conclusion articulated by interviewees was that multiculturalism in Ontario needs to be readdressed, and that it needs to pay closer attention to issues of religious pluralism. With two high profile debates having hit the headlines in recent years, on shari'ah and faith-based education, it would seem that Ontario cannot afford to ignore the fact that religious communities are demanding the right for their identities to be endorsed and supported in the same way that cultural identities are endorsed and funded through multiculturalism. However, advocacy organisations have to maintain consistency: they cannot use multiculturalism as a legal concept to support their arguments for equity and then claim in the same breath that it is insubstantial. Furthermore, organisations cannot protest the insubstantiality of multiculturalism if they are not willing to include all faith groups in their reconstituted vision of what a religiously sensitive multiculturalism could look like.

The task for Jewish advocacy organisations is therefore to engage in more sustained debate about whether the parameters of multiculturalism can be expanded to include and endorse religious freedoms and identities. Whilst it would be impossible to say what a religiously sensitive multiculturalism would look like, it would be hopeful to think that it would be able to assuage some of the fears described by my interviewees in response to the question of why Tory's proposal provoked such a debate. One would hope that there might be a time when the mention of Islamic schooling did not automatically conjure up ideas of madrasas full of "jihad-spouting fanatics" (Margel 2007), for example.

Whether a religiously sensitive multiculturalism has the potential to see funding extended to faith-schools, however, is impossible to determine. My interviewees argued unanimously that no government in Ontario would remove funding from Catholic schools, on the basis that Catholics formed such a large percentage of the Ontario electorate. For faith-schools of other religions to receive public funding, therefore would be contingent on the willingness of the government to extend the privilege of equity to all faith-groups. Whether or not one agrees with the idea that religious schools should be publicly funded however, it seems particularly sad that in a so-called multicultural country, the chances of all religions being treated equally is dependent on an act of political courage.

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