

Education inequity

BY EUGENE PAQUIN, THE STARPHOENIX OCTOBER 28, 2011

The story, More students in Saskatoon schools (SP, Oct. 20), identifies some challenges created by increased enrolment.

It quite correctly identifies the cash crunch for school divisions as a problem, especially in a period of rapid growth. I suggest that this problem affects Catholic education disproportionately.

The Education Ministry's practice of encouraging and approving joint projects limits the growth of new Catholic schools in new subdivisions and, in particular, diminishes the ability of those in the minority faith to create a distinctive education system that serves the communities where we live.

A century ago, schools were built through the hard work and financial support of Catholics in a community. Recently, the ability to raise funds locally has been removed through provincial legislation.

I encourage the province to be more responsive to rapid and sustained growth. Catholics should not be penalized for raising their own revenue or even building their own facilities.

A regressive tax regime unduly limits our ability to flourish and meet the needs of Catholic families.

A more progressive approach would be for the province to return significant financial control and decision making to Catholic school divisions. For their part, Catholic leaders must adopt a growth strategy that fully defines Catholic education and the benefits that can accrue to students, families and the community.

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