

Board considering its options after court ruling on religious instruction

The Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board is considering its options after a recent ruling by the Ontario Superior Court of Justice.

The court, in a ruling earlier this month, determined that parents have the right to have their children exempt from religious courses and programs in publicly-funded Catholic high schools.

According to a release from OneSchoolSystem.org, Brampton resident Oliver Erazo was successful in his efforts to have his kids exempted from the religious courses.

The release added the court decision does nothing to change the situation for youngsters in elementary school, as it pointed out that children admitted to these schools are still expected to comply with the sectarian components of their courses and programs.

‘Ontario families bear a heavy cross so that Catholic Ontarians can have a segregated, sectarian school system at public expense,’ observed OneSchoolsystem.org president Leonard Baak. ‘Hundreds of thousands of children are consigned to long commutes past their nearest publicly funded school each day to attend another one farther away. Many of these children are also denied the opportunity to attend a school in their own communities and the entire system is impoverished by the costly and unnecessary overlap and duplication.’

‘Today, these burdens are a little lighter for families, Catholic or not, preferring a non-sectarian school environment for their children,’ he added. ‘Parents of Grade 9 to 12 students living in a community where the nearest school, the least crowded school, or the best school is Catholic, can now chose that school without fear that their children will be forced to take sectarian courses and programs of little interest to them or with which they may disagree.’

The court ruling was released April 4, according to the Board's Manager of Communications and Community Relations Bruce Campbell, and it has 15 days to decide if an appeal is warranted.

‘We're considering all our options,’ he said. ‘At that point, we'll see how we want to proceed.’