



Ontario Catholic School
Trustees' Association

July 26, 2018

MEMORANDUM

TO: Chairpersons and Directors of Education
- All Catholic District School Boards

FROM: Beverley Eckensweiler, President

SUBJECT: Media Story - Merging School Systems

The issue of merging Ontario's publicly funded Catholic school system with the public system is a topic that is continually promoted by one school system advocates. In keeping with that trend, this week two professors from the University of Western Ontario (Samuel Trosow and Bill Irwin) wrote an article that was published in the media. Both professors were also interviewed by the CBC.

Read the full article here: <https://theconversation.com/its-time-to-merge-ontarios-two-school-systems-99922>

Since the article's publication, the Minister of Education, The Hon. Lisa Thompson, issued the following statement through her office to CTV News:

"We do not support the amalgamation of the separate school boards. This is not an issue that we will be revisiting."

As is common with similar articles advocating for one school system, the piece highlighted the mythical savings to be realized through a system merger. The figures are not credibly substantiated. At present, no response by the Association is contemplated, however, to ensure that boards have the facts and message to support local conversations, the following information is provided for your use and reference. OCSTA will be providing similar information to the government and our system supporters to support factual communications on this topic. Please see attached messages supporting the facts that counter the arguments for amalgamation.



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Ontario's Distinctive Education System Works

At this time in our province we should be reflecting on the ways in which we can strengthen an education system that has worked well for many decades.

Catholic schools are a valued segment of Ontario's education system - 2.2 million Catholic school ratepayers demonstrate that confidence through their decision to support and send their children to publicly funded Catholic schools. There are 600,000 students in Ontario's English and French Catholic school systems, which represents almost a third of Ontario's vibrant education system.

Catholic and public school boards work collaboratively to educate students in a way that makes the best use of our tax dollars.

In fact, Catholic and public school boards actually save taxpayers millions of dollars annually through a variety of successful business partnerships in such areas as: transportation, curriculum design, co-operative school financing, purchasing, energy management and other shared services.

Funding is primarily allocated on a per-pupil basis, so any perceived savings through amalgamation would be minimal unless there are fewer students. Regardless of the school board structure, the number of students remain the same.

Recent research from the University of Western Ontario (Timothy Cobban, 2014) shows that amalgamation does not save money.

The cost of amalgamation would far out-strip any savings. The last amalgamation in the education sector happened in 1998 and resulted in the province spending \$1.2 billion in additional "transition" costs for that amalgamation (SOURCE: Ministry of Education).

If schools were amalgamated today, many of the province's 2 million students would be displaced. Amalgamation would require children from both public and Catholic schools to move from their current schools and would necessitate hundreds of contentious boundary reviews, which only serve to weaken communities.