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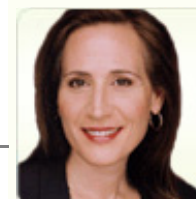
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PREMIER
DALTON MCGUINTYCENSUS ·
RECENSEMENT**Policy/Program Memorandum No. 108****Issued under the authority of the Deputy Minister of Education****Date of Issue:** January 12, 1989**Effective:** Until
revoked or modified**Subject:** **OPENING OR CLOSING EXERCISES IN
PUBLIC ELEMENTARY AND
SECONDARY SCHOOLS****Application:** Chairpersons of Boards of Education
Directors of Education of Boards of
Education
Principals of Public Elementary and
Secondary SchoolsMINISTER OF
EDUCATION
**Sandra
Pupatello**

OFFICIAL BIOGRAPHIES

- Minister of Education
- Deputy Minister of Education

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I. Background

The decision of the Ontario Court of Appeal, dated September 23, 1988, struck down subsection 28 (1) of Regulation 262 concerning religious exercises in public elementary schools. This subsection, and the decision of the Court relating to it,



PREMIER'S KID ZONE



ABOUT ONTARIO

did not apply to schools operated by separate school boards.

The spirit of the decision of the Court of Appeal was essentially that one religion must not be given a position of primacy and that the content of opening or closing exercises must reflect the multicultural realities and traditions of Ontario society.

Subsequent to the Court ruling, an interim policy, dated September 28, 1988, was established, whereby opening or closing exercises were made optional for school boards. In schools where such exercises were to be held, however, "O Canada" and content that reflected the spirit of the ruling of the Court of Appeal were required.

This interim policy was intended to remain in effect only until policy considerations were finalized and amendments to Regulation 262 were adopted.

II. **Amendments to Regulation 262**

A copy of the amendments to Regulation 262 relating to opening or closing exercises accompanies this memorandum.

The amendments provide for a new section 4. Subsections 28(1), (2),

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and (3), and subsections 29(1), (2), and (3), as well as other references to "religious exercises" in sections 28 and 29, are deleted.

The following points summarize the content of the new section 4:

1. All public elementary and secondary schools in Ontario must be opened or closed each day with the national anthem. "God Save the Queen" may be included.
2. The inclusion of any content beyond "O Canada" in opening or closing exercises is to be optional for public school boards.
3. Where public school boards resolve to include, in the opening or closing exercises in their schools, anything in addition to the content set out in item 1 above, it must be composed of either or both of the following:
 - a. one or more readings that impart social, moral, or spiritual values and that are representative of our multicultural society. Readings may be chosen from both scriptural writings, including prayers, and secular writings;
 - b. a period of silence.
4. Parents who object to part or all of the exercises may apply to the principal to have their children exempted. Pupils who are adults may also exercise such a right.

III. Implementation

When implementing the amendments listed above, school boards should take particular note of the following:

1. *Purposes*

The purposes of opening or closing exercises are patriotic and educational. Such exercises are intended to nurture allegiance to Canada and to contribute to the social, moral, and spiritual development of the pupils.

Contributing to the social, moral, and spiritual development of pupils includes reinforcing the positive societal values that, in general, Canadians hold and regard as essential to the well-being of our society. These values transcend cultures and faiths, reinforce democratic rights and responsibilities, and are based on a fundamental belief in the worth of all persons.

2. *Readings*

Readings selected for opening or closing exercises

must fulfil educational purposes.

Since the social, moral, and spiritual development of Canadians has roots in many religious and philosophical traditions, readings must be drawn from a variety of scriptural and secular sources representative of our multicultural society. Prayers, including the "Lord's Prayer", may be included, but only as readings.

The collective recitation of a specific reading from a particular religious tradition can no longer be permitted, as such a practice is not in accordance with the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

3. *Period of Silence*

A period of silence is intended to be used for such activities as personal reflection or individual silent prayer.

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