



Independent Schools At A Glance

*This information and these statistics were gathered based on information found on provincial government websites and Statistics Canada (which hasn't enquired about private schools since 2004 in their "Back-To-School" stats and reported in 2007 & 2012)

Number of Private Schools in Canada – 1907

Number of Students in Private Schools in Canada – 424,000 (about 8% total student numbers in Canada)

Number of Private Schools in Ontario – 963

Number of Students in Private Schools in Ontario – 126,000 (about 6% of total student numbers in Ontario)

***Amount of annual savings to Province of Ontario – \$1.6 billion – based on average \$10,267 cost per pupil**

Private Schools & Students By Province -

Ontario – 963 schools – 126,000 students

British Columbia – 347 schools – 70,705 students

Alberta – 159 schools – 11,272 students

Saskatchewan – 52 schools – 8700 students

Manitoba – 113 schools – 8990 students

*Quebec – 220 schools – 103,100 students

New Brunswick – 30 schools – 5319 students

Nova Scotia – 14 schools – 2662 students

Newfoundland – 6 schools – 450 students

Prince Edward Island – 3 schools – 220 students

* Quebec has the highest concentration of students in private schools with 10.6% of the entire student population attending – the other provinces range from 2%-6%. Ontario has the highest number of private schools with just over 6% of the entire student population attending.

The Shapiro Report – 1985 Government Report of the Commission On Private Schools In Ontario

Government support for independent schools must be viewed as an enhancement of the education of the public in this province. In the only comprehensive study of the issue in Ontario, the 1985 Report of the Commission on Private Schools in Ontario (aka Shapiro Report), the Commission stated,

“That, as a matter of public policy, and so long as the public policy objectives [of public schooling] are not substantially eroded, new initiatives both in the public support of private schools and in the relationship of these schools to the public schools should be actively developed and tested. (p. 40).”

The Report goes on to say that, “many such schools also contribute to the fulfillment of public purposes in ways substantial enough to make the label ‘private’ somewhat misleading” (p.43) and the Report subsequently recommended the word “independent” as a better descriptor, giving a clue about the intended relationship of independent schools to public schools in providing public education to Ontario’s children.

Independent School Myths De-Bunked

School Choice Does NOT Weaken Public Education – In all jurisdictions where governments have supported school choice, they have also retained their commitment to quality public education. In North America, wherever provinces (5 – BC, Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Quebec) or states (37) support choice, 90% of all students still attend public schools.

The Vast Majority Of Private School Students Come From Middle-Class Families – In broad-stroke terms, there are 3 reasons used by parents when choosing a school. Parents choose because they desire a certain teaching framework for their children (ex. Montessori, Waldorf), or they seek a religious framework (ex. Jewish, Muslim, Christian) or they have a particular socio-civic framework in mind (ex. Upper Canada College, Bishop Strachan). In Ontario, over 75% of the students attending private schools are enrolled for the first 2 reasons. Many of these schools have financial support mechanisms for families of lesser means to remain affordable and accessible.

These Parents Want A Strong Public System Too! – Parents who choose independent schools want what is best for ALL children. To its credit, the public system provides a great deal of variety to respond to the needs of a diverse student body (more so in larger urban areas), but in spite of that variety, some families cannot find what they need in the public system. Over the last decade the courts, including the Supreme Court of Canada, have defined public education as having the goal of *meeting the educational needs of the greatest number*. It is unreasonable to expect one system to effectively serve the needs of every child.

Parental Involvement In Independent Schools – Parents who choose a particular school often wish to foster a strong relationship with the school and the teachers. From the school’s end, frequent and meaningful communication with parents is usually presented as one feature of quality education. These 2 factors result in the formation of an educational community focused around the school. In many independent schools, parents have direct influence by way of participating on boards and committees.

What Parents Look For – Parents should be looking for the kind of school that best matches the values of their family and the learning needs of their children. Parents should look for schools that meet or exceed the standards of the Ontario Curriculum and Ministry of Education Guidelines.