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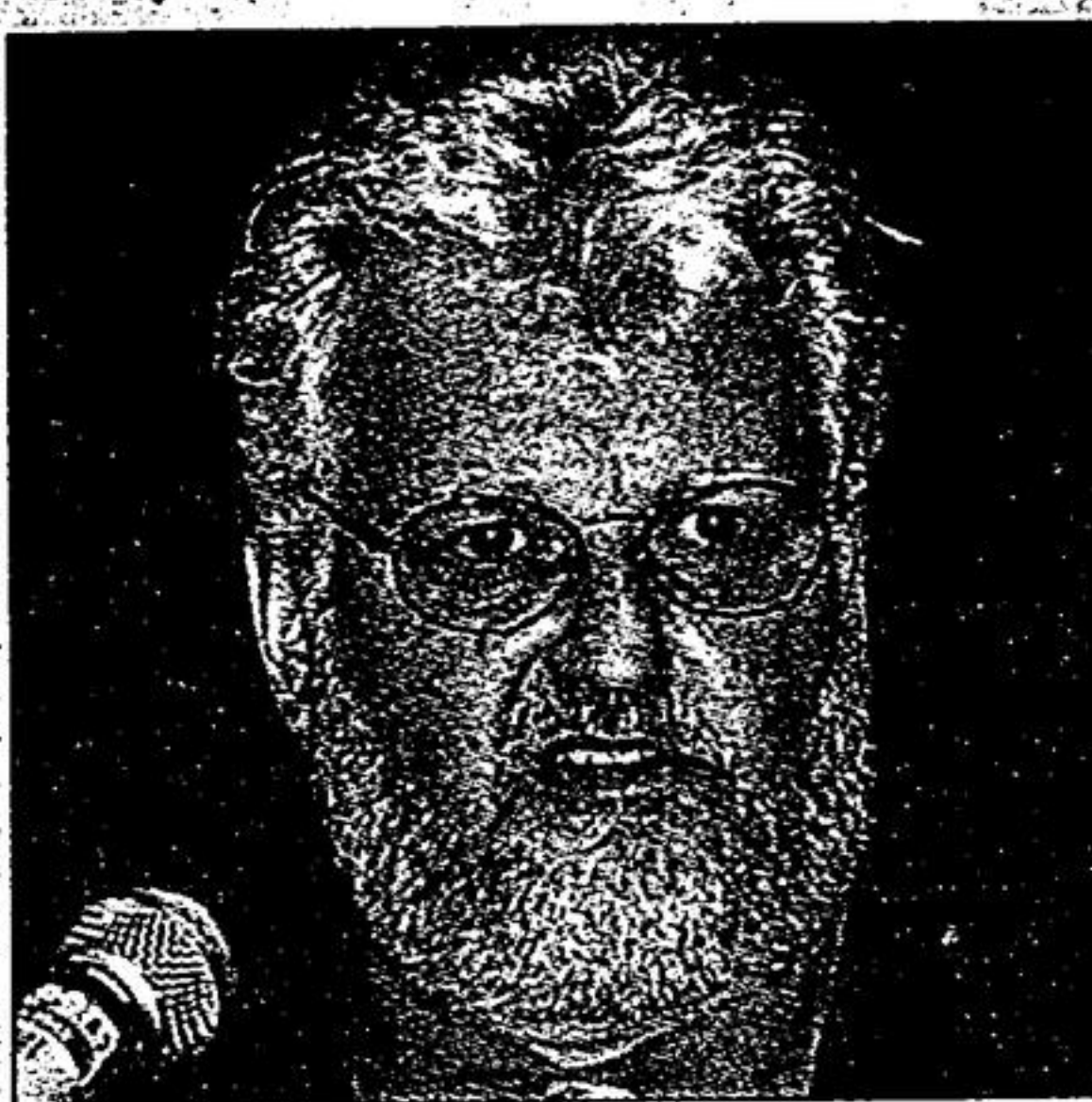
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EARL MANNERS: Union leader also calls for the province to scrap its private school tax credit initiative.

# Dismantling system against Charter: MPP

From page 8.

Catholic schools throughout Ontario.

As a former Catholic school board trustee, Thornhill MPP Tina Molinari said she understands the merits of a Catholic education system in which her government would never consider dismantling. "Absolutely not," said Mrs.

eliminate that would violate the Charter of Rights."

"Catholic families have and should always have, the option to send their children to schools that espouse their Catholic values and beliefs," she added.

Markham resident Josephine Parlagreco said the separate school system offers children a quality of education not afforded in the public system.

"They're taught qualities that are rooted in Catholic beliefs," said Mrs. Parlagreco, co-chairperson of the Regional Catholic School Council.

"They become better people as they develop those virtues and values that is built in everything they do," she said.

Mrs. Parlagreco added York Region District School Board's character education program geared to high school students promotes traits similar to those taught to Catholic elementary and high school students.

"With so much going out there, I would hate to see a further disruption to the choices we have."

In addition to the elimination of a publicly funded secular school system, Mr. Manners would like to see the province scrap its private school tax credit initiative.

"The free market approach doesn't work," said Mr. Manners, who believes the government should rework its funding model and immediately address the looming teacher shortage crisis.

"Public education is based on the principle that every student has the opportunity to succeed," he said.

"We can have quality and equity, but quality and no equity is a symbol of privilege, not education."

However, Country Day School assistant headmaster Jim Bayler disagrees.

Mr. Bayler said some of the King City private school's 708 students come from families of mixed economic backgrounds.

"(Mr. Manners') opinion is that high-end families get enough breaks and don't need another break," he said.

"Most of our students come from two-income families with hard-working parents who work very hard to give them the privilege of attending private school."

Regardless of political stripe, Mr. Manners called on public school supporters to work together to improve a troubled and deteriorating public education system.

"If you believe in public education, we have to work together to enhance it... or else we will remain polarized and we won't get the system we want for our children in the future," he said.

Manners noted the provincial government has reduced education spending by at least \$2 billion over the past seven years and need to start pumping money back into the system or consider sharing the responsibility with local municipalities.

"They're not cutting fat. They're cutting bone and killing the carcass," Mr. Manners said.

"There has to be some local control of education funding."

"I believe municipalities know how to make those dollars work best for their schools."

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