

Gerard Kennedy
Distinguished Visiting Professor

June 12, 2008

Mr. John Campbell
Chair, Toronto District School Board

RE: Board Decision with Respect to Genocide Curriculum, June 12, 2008

Conveyed by email

Dear Mr. Chair and Trustees:

I want to commend the TDSB for making efforts to deepen the understanding of world genocides through the development of local curriculum.

There can be few subjects as sobering and necessary for our education system to be able to convey well to students than the lessons of these instances of inhumanity. Given this importance, I encourage the board to consider whether the current curriculum development process has been thorough-going enough, given its inability to fully consider the Ukrainian Holodomor or Famine, despite efforts by interested parties since January of this year.


It is difficult to understand, given the historical and pedagogical arguments available, how the Holodomor could be excluded as a core part of this curriculum if it had been considered properly.

Having a curriculum that reflects community values and interests is one of the most difficult tasks that a local board has to carry out under the Education Act and that becomes amplified with the powerful feelings associated with the horror of genocide. The Board is the legitimate filter for these expectations however, and it seems clear that the process to date has not allowed for the kind of sensitivity necessary given the special subject matter.

I request the Board hold off its approval of the curriculum until the process is able give due regard to all the important historical and community considerations that need to be taken into account. I offer my assistance if there is any way in which I can assist in the work required to make this possible.

I respectfully request that you share these views with your fellow trustees and I wish you the best with your deliberations this evening.

Sincere regards,



Gerard Kennedy