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**RE: Questions for Ontario's Candidates**

1 message

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**Michael Bell** <mb@knowaboutnetwork.com>

Wed, May 28, 2014 at 3:02 PM

To: vp-english@secularalliance.ca

Hello, responding on behalf of Green Party candidate Gary Beamish. Please find answers below...

1. Does your party support the separation of religion and state, and government neutrality in all matters between believer and non-believer?

Yes

2. Does your party believe there should be any legal limits on the criticism of religious opinion in the public square?

Yes

3. "What is your party's position on granting people exemptions from neutral, generally applicable laws and policies based on their religious beliefs (e.g. "religious accommodation")?"

As long as it does not discriminate.

4. At present, the Ontario legislature is opened with prayers from several religious traditions. Occasionally a moment of silence is substituted for the non-religious communities. But a moment of silence which unlike a prayer, lacks all content, fails to do justice to the roughly 25% of Ontarians who are atheists, agnostics and humanists. Would you support instead the addition of a secular invocation that calls on elected officials to commit themselves to working in the best interest of their constituents and on behalf of all Ontarians?

No, I don't believe it would help.

5. The cost of running two geographically overlapping school systems cost the Ontario taxpayer about \$1 billion per year in wasteful infrastructure, transportation and administrative expenses. The public funding of a faith-based school system has resulted in conflicts where religious privilege comes up against human rights. Catholic schools have illegally obstructed the creation of Gay Straight Alliances and have banned books written by atheists. The United Nations has twice found Ontario in violation of the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights for a system which privileges a single faith and which can and frequently does turn away members of other religions for admission as pupils or teachers. Other provinces, notably Quebec, have shown that a simple and straightforward bilateral constitutional amendment can easily end all these problems.

What is your position on the continued public funding of Roman Catholic schools? If you favour the status quo, please explain how you respond to the above points regarding wasteful use of scarce funds, blatant discrimination and condemnation by the United Nations?

Green Party of Ontario is in favour of one system.

6. Conseil scolaire de district catholique Centre-Sud (Catholic Central South District School Board) in Mississauga was recently shown to have conspired to impede the formation and functioning of a Gay Straight Alliance in one of their schools, in direct violation of the Accepting Schools Act (Bill 13) which is now enshrined in the Education Act. What action would you take to guarantee Roman Catholic Schools stop breaking the law and stop blocking the creation and functioning of Gay Straight Alliances in their schools? Would you support an informational pamphlet to be sent to elementary and secondary Catholic school students and parents regarding their right, if they so choose, to form a Gay-Straight Alliance?

Yes