

NEWS RELEASE

Funding and regulation of independent schools varies greatly across the provinces: Only five provide partial funding

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For immediate release

TORONTO—Only half of Canada’s provinces provide even partial funding for independent schools, which in turn, can lower tuition costs for parents, finds a new study by the Fraser Institute, an independent, non-partisan Canadian public policy think-tank.

“Independent schools offer parents greater choice, and often provide religious or alternative teaching pedagogies not available in the public school system, but across Canada there is a wide variety of regulations and funding models for these schools,” said Deani Van Pelt, Fraser Institute senior fellow and co-author of *The Funding and Regulation of Independent Schools in Canada*.

The study, a new comprehensive catalogue of the different regulations and funding arrangements governing every independent school in Canada, finds that only five provinces—B.C., Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Quebec—provide partial funding to independent schools for operating costs.

That partial funding ranges from 35 to 80 per cent per student, depending on the type of school and the degree to which it meets certain provincial regulations.

But government funding comes with strings attached, including the mandated use of provincial curriculum, hiring provincially certified teachers, and where applicable, participating in provincial testing.

“Requiring independent schools to use the provincial curriculum is of particular and growing concern to many administrators and parents because of changes being made to provincial curriculum,” commented Van Pelt.

Surprisingly, some independent schools—such as several in Quebec—that do not qualify for or choose to refuse partial government funding are also required to meet these criteria.

Ontario—which is home to approximately half of all independent schools in Canada—and the Maritime provinces provide no funding to independent schools.

In 2013/14, the most recent year of comparable data, there were nearly 2,000 independent schools in Canada enrolling more than 360,000 students between kindergarten and Grade 12.

“As parents across Canada increasingly look for more school choice when it comes to their children’s education, it’s important to understand how diverse the regulation and funding landscape is for independent schools,” Van Pelt said.

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