

## **Statement by Steve Turloukis (Applicant)**

Date: June 23, 2016    Location: Superior Court house, Hamilton, ON

My name is Steve Turloukis and I am the applicant in this matter involving the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board. Six years ago, I asked my kids' school for something very simple: I asked them to tell me when my children would be exposed to certain materials. I made this request because my children are required by their faith to abstain from certain types of instruction and activities.

My request is not unique. The HWDSB has a policy allowing children to opt-out. The exact same written request I submitted has been honoured by other school boards across Ontario. My attorney has submitted evidence showing that even other Principals within the HWDSB had been honoring identical requests at the same time that my family was being rejected by my kids' school.

The HWDSB's refusal to give me advance notice is *scandalous*. My lawyer has obtained an internal document written by the Board's own in-house Equity Consultant. The Board's own Equity Consultant had advised senior board officials to give me the advance notice that I am asking for. We have also submitted evidence that the Board's Equity Principal, not to be confused with the Equity Consultant, advised me that they would give me advance notice....so the court has evidence involving not just one, but *two* of the Board's own in-house experts indicating that they could and would give me the advance notice that I requested.

The Board also has not one, but two policies, that require them to give me advance notice. This same Equity Principal confirmed under oath during cross examination that these policies required them to give me advance notice....and they still won't give me advance notice. I would ask that anybody who is interested in seeing these policies go to the HWDSB website. The first policy is called the Selection of Learning Resources Directive – Policy 7.3. The second policy is called policy 2.0 Engagement Pillar Policy.

Section 218.1 of the Education Act requires school boards to enforce the policies that they pass. The HWDSB's failure to give me advance notice is therefore not only a violation of their policies, but also a violation of the Education Act. What has been the government's response to the actions of the HWDSB? Did Queen's Park send investigators to see what was going on in Hamilton? No. Did anyone get fired over this? No. Instead of ensuring that the HWDSB was complying with their own policies and the Education Act, the liberal government sent some lawyers to actually fight me in court.

This issue is not just about my Christian faith. Every parent, regardless of faith, race, gender or sexual orientation has sincerely held beliefs of some kind.....and every parent, regardless of faith, race, gender or sexual orientation has the right to know what their kids are learning in school. Keeping secrets from parents can never be justified in a free and democratic society. It is my hope that the people who are here will take the time to investigate what I have shared and hold the HWDSB responsible for what my family has endured.

Thank you