



May 5, 2017

**PASTORAL LETTER FROM THE BISHOPS OF SASKATCHEWAN
ON THE THEODORE SCHOOL RULING**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As many of you will know, on April 20, 2017, Justice Donald Layh ruled on the Theodore Court case that the Government of Saskatchewan could no longer fund non-Catholic students attending Catholic schools in Saskatchewan, starting June 30, 2018. This judgment protects the rights of the Catholic school system to continue; but it would remove funding for our ecumenical and interfaith brothers and sisters whose children have been granted permission to attend Catholic schools. This has raised many questions and created a large degree of uncertainty for students, parents, staff, and other members of the Catholic school community.

Soon after the decision was announced, Premier Brad Wall and Minister of Education Don Morgan both publicly stated their support for Catholic education and their disappointment with the court's judgment. On Monday, May 1st, the Premier signaled that that government would be invoking the 'notwithstanding clause', which effectively gives the province five years to discern how to respond to the court's ruling. The Leader of the Opposition, Trent Wotherspoon, noted his party's agreement with the use of the 'notwithstanding clause' in this case. For all of this, we are deeply grateful.

Meanwhile, the Saskatchewan Catholic School Boards Association (SCSBA), with the unanimous endorsement of all eight Catholic school boards in the province, announced on April 28th that it would appeal the recent decision in the Theodore court case. The government has not yet indicated whether it will also appeal the decision.

The outcome of the current tensions regarding funding for faith-based education will have a deep, lasting impact on the Catholic Church in Saskatchewan, its role in education, our relations with our ecumenical and inter-faith partners, and with the community at large. Living in a pluralistic society requires dealing with difficult decisions. As leaders of the Catholic churches in Saskatchewan, it is our strong hope that our society will allow religious faiths to play a constructive role in education as in other areas of our common life; and that Catholic schools might continue to welcome the children of families who aspire to faith-based education. We have much to offer, and society has much to lose if religious faith is marginalized and our values are not able to contribute to the common good.

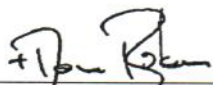
'To help our people rediscover Christ, the incarnate word of God because we are all called to holiness'

We encourage you to let your elected officials (your MLA, the Minister of Education Don Morgan, Premier Brad Wall, and Leader of the NDP Trent Wotherspoon) know that you endorse the government's decision to invoke the notwithstanding clause. You might also wish to express your hope that the government joins in appealing the recent Theodore court ruling. A list of MLAs can be found at <http://www.legassembly.sk.ca/mlas/>. Additional information is available at <http://www.scsba.ca/theodore-case>. You might choose to write your own letter, to send an email using the electronic submission form provided at <http://www.catholicedspirit.ca/>, to send a letter signed by your parishioners, or to use the attached letter that we have drafted for your convenience.

We are also sending you separately the letter that was sent out to parents of students at Catholic schools in the Catholic school division in which your parish is situated. We take this opportunity to reiterate our strong support of the Catholic School Districts in the province.

Thank you for your continued support of Catholic education. Please keep our students, teachers, and all associated with our Catholic schools, in your prayers at this critical moment in time.

Yours in the Risen Christ,



*Most Rev. Donald Bolen
Archbishop of Regina*



*Most Rev. Albert Thevenot
Bishop of Prince Albert*



*Most Rev. Murray Chatlain
Archbishop of Keewatin-Le Pas*



*Very Rev. Fr. Kevin McGee
Saskatoon Diocesan Administrator*



*Most Rev. Bryan Bayda
Ukrainian Eparchial Bishop of Saskatoon*

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