

Privatization of Public Education. In Whose Interest?

“A chance to reach 5.4 million kids and over 300,000 educators in the same place at the same time for 10 months of the year, every weekday for 7 hours each day. It’s a big opportunity ... and teachers and students are reachable.”

Paton Publishing presentation to
6th Annual Understanding Youth Conference, Toronto,
Ontario.



August 2005

ETFO's position paper on privatization of public education, *A Promise to Ontario's Children. Public Education is Not for Sale* (2000), identified a number of ways privatization affects public education from school choice to corporate involvement in education to free trade agreements. All of these issues continue to be of concern to ETFO and other teacher unions across Canada. Schools remain underfunded and many corporations see public schools as a market to be sought.

"We estimate that domestic business opportunity in the K12 market amounts to \$75 billion, or 15% of all US K12 expenditures. We estimate this opportunity will expand in the next 10 years to 20% of the market ... as the K12 market moves into an age of data, efficiency, technology and globalization. "

New Rules, New Schools, New Market, K12 Education Industry Outlook 2005.

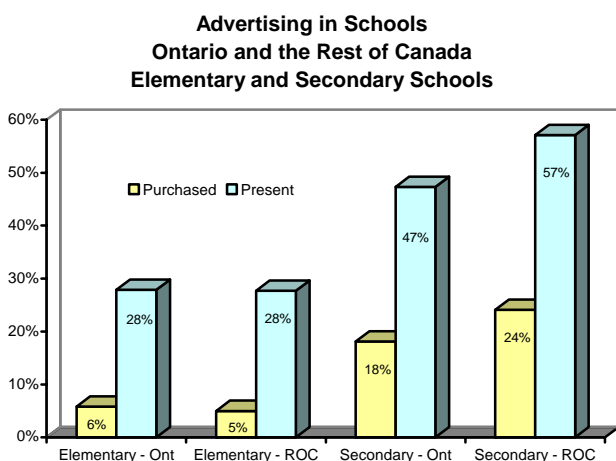
To identify the extent of private funding in public education, both commercial and individual, a national survey was conducted in the fall of 2004 under the auspices of the Canadian Teachers' Federation, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, and the Fédération des syndicats de l'enseignement. Each teacher union across Canada distributed the survey to all schools in its jurisdiction. The survey was distributed to a key teacher in each school, asking about the extent of corporate and business advertising, sponsored educational materials, user fees, and fundraising.¹

A total of 3105 surveys were returned, a national response rate of 21 percent. Thirty-six percent of the total were from Ontario; 461 were returned from ETFO schools, a response rate of 18 percent.

School Type ²	Ontario	Rest of Canada	TOTAL
Elementary	82.3%	71.5%	75.4%
Secondary	16.8%	17.1%	17.0%
All grades	0.2%	9.1%	5.9%
Other ³	0.6%	2.3%	1.7%
TOTAL	1081	1905	2986

Advertising in Schools

Teachers were asked to indicate whether advertising space had been sold in their school. Further, they were asked whether corporate or business advertising was present in any way.



Ontario elementary schools are very much like schools in the rest of Canada on both questions; about 30 percent of elementary schools have advertising in their schools although most of the schools were not paid for the ads. Ontario secondary schools, however, are somewhat less likely than other secondary schools to either have ads purchased by a corporation or to have corporate ads displayed in their schools.

Primarily the ads are located in hallways, cafeterias, and on school supplies. ETFO members indicated that the ads are primarily on pop machines and agendas.

¹ For further information on this survey, please see the CTF website – www.ctf-fce.ca

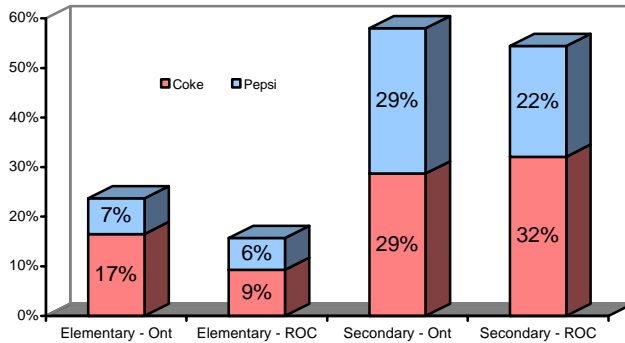
² 119 schools missing information on school type.

³ Other schools include schools devoted to special education and adult education.

Exclusive Contracts

Twenty-four percent of Ontario elementary schools have an exclusive arrangement with either Coke or Pepsi. This is a higher rate than elementary schools in the rest of Canada.

Exclusive Arrangements with Coke or Pepsi



Exclusive arrangements with cola companies are much more prevalent in secondary schools – 58 percent in Ontario secondary schools, 54 percent in secondary schools in the rest of Canada.

It should be noted that in elementary schools, pop machines usually sell other products such as juice and water.

“The school system is where you build brand loyalty.”
 CEO John Alm of Coca-Cola Enterprises.

Exclusive contracts for

food and other services also exist in our schools. Eight percent of Ontario elementary schools have such an arrangement for food services, compared with fewer than six percent of elementary schools in the rest of Canada. Almost 40 percent of Ontario secondary schools have an exclusive arrangement for food services, compared with 17 percent for secondary schools in the rest of Canada.

Sponsorships and Partnerships

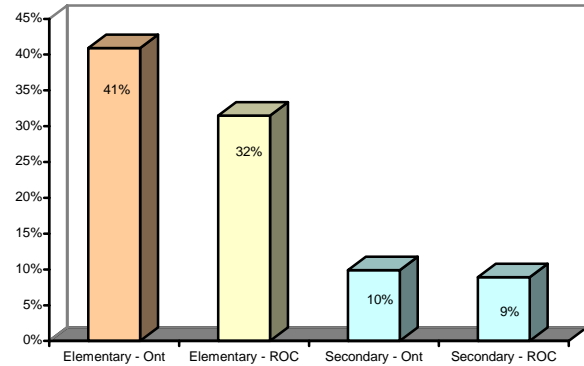
Some schools provide some services and programs through a partnership or sponsorship with a corporation or business. Twelve percent of Ontario elementary schools provide some services or programs in this way, compared with 17 percent of elementary schools in the rest of Canada. Twenty-eight percent of Ontario secondary schools have partnered with a business or corporation to provide programs or services, compared with 32 percent of secondary schools in the rest of Canada.

	Elementary		Secondary	
	Ontario	Rest of Canada	Ontario	Rest of Canada
Tutoring Services	1.6%	0.9%	1.1%	1.5%
Academic Courses	1.6%	0.9%	5.5%	2.1%
Athletic Programs	1.5%	2.3%	6.6%	16.6%
Extracurricular	3.9%	4.9%	6.0%	9.2%
Technology courses	0.7%	1.5%	11.0%	4.9%
Staff	0.3%	0.1%	1.6%	0.3%
Other	5.6%	9.2%	8.2%	8.9%
Any of the above	12.2%	17.0%	27.5%	31.6%

Elementary schools are more likely to partner with a business to provide extracurricular programs, such as afterschool chess clubs. Other programs included breakfast clubs, and partnerships with WalMart and Tim Horton’s. At the secondary level in Ontario, the largest category is technology courses.

Participation in such programs as Campbell's Labels for Education, collecting grocery tapes, and various recycling programs to earn incentives is much more common in elementary schools than in secondary schools. The participation in Ontario's elementary schools is higher than the rest of Canada.

Participation in Incentive Programs



The Campbell's Labels for Education program has been around for over 30 years in the US. In Canada outside of Quebec⁴, it has been operating since 1998. By collecting labels from a number of Campbell's products, schools can get resources such as a sponge ball (220 points), a tug-of-war rope (9,915 points), musical instruments such as clarinets and trumpets (52,550 to 72,490 points), a desktop computer (89,600 points), or a new playground (1,000,000 points).

Curriculum and Classroom Supplements

Elementary Schools using Scholastic learning materials:	
Ontario	71%
Rest of Canada	59%

Over 70 percent of Ontario elementary schools access learning materials from Scholastic, compared with less than 60 percent of elementary schools in the rest of Canada. The use of these materials is much less common at the secondary level (13 percent in Ontario, 18 percent in the rest of Canada). Most typically,

teachers distribute book order forms to students. Teachers earn bonus coupons based on the number of orders they place. These coupons can be redeemed for classroom materials and books. The Scholastic website contains tips on how to increase book orders from students.

Ten percent of Ontario's elementary schools use the "Book It!" program offered by Pizza Hut, an incentive reading program where pizzas are awarded to students for meeting reading targets.

Seventeen percent of Ontario elementary schools subscribe to *Kidsworld*, slightly higher than the rest of Canada. Other magazines included the *Chirp/Chickadee/Owl* family, *Fuel* and *Verve* (aimed at the teen years), and various newspapers and newspaper supplements.

	Magazines in Schools			
	Elementary		Secondary	
	Ontario	Rest of Canada	Ontario	Rest of Canada
What!	1%	3%	11%	10%
Kidsworld	17%	12%	1%	2%
Protecting Our Planet	4%	3%	0%	0%
Other	9%	7%	18%	11%

Defining product placement: "Although the product is visible, it is often not the focus, as it needs to fit almost seamlessly into the context of a scene or story. Product integration is a special type of product placement in which the advertiser's product is central to the program's plot line."

From *Product Placement Spending in Media 2005*

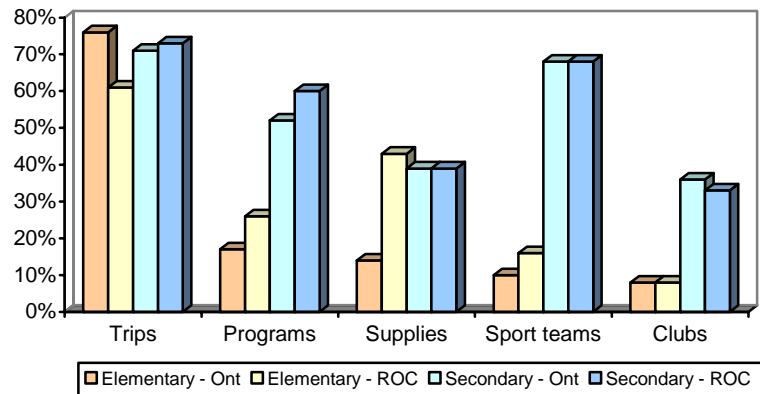
⁴ The Quebec *Education Act* does not permit contributions or donations to schools that are tied to the purchase of certain goods or services. Therefore, Campbell's Labels for Education and other such programs are not permitted in Quebec.

Selling Services, User Fees, and Fundraising

Twelve percent of Ontario elementary schools sell services to generate income, compared with 17 percent of elementary schools in the rest of Canada. Fifteen percent of Ontario secondary schools sell services, compared with 24 percent of secondary schools in the rest of Canada. The most common service sold by Ontario public elementary schools is rental of space – from the gymnasium to renting space to day cares. A large number also sell curriculum to other boards.

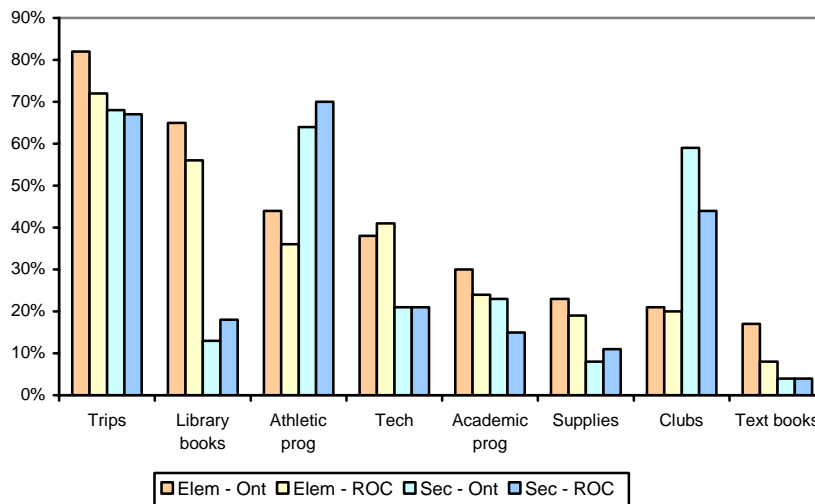
Twelve percent of elementary schools in Ontario have a charitable tax number allowing them to issue tax receipts for donations. Twenty-two percent of secondary schools in Ontario have such a number. Outside of Ontario, 11 percent of elementary schools and 18 percent of secondary schools have a charitable tax number.

User Fees Charged for:



Except for school trips, Ontario elementary schools are less likely than elementary schools in the rest of Canada to charge user fees for a variety of services and programs. Except for school trips and school supplies, elementary schools in the rest of Canada are less likely to charge user fees than secondary schools.

School and Parent Fundraising for:



Elementary schools are more likely than secondary schools to fundraise to provide for school trips, library books, technology programs, academic programs, school supplies, and textbooks. Ontario's elementary schools are similar to elementary schools in the rest of Canada in their use of fundraising. Note that 65 percent of Ontario's elementary schools are fundraising for library books.

"It's a neat little trick: instead of taxing the community to provide good resources for all children's schools, keep taxes low and then pay the extra money so just *your* kids benefit."

Kathy Emery and Susan Ohanian
Why is Corporate America Bashing Our Public Schools? 2004, p. 27

At the elementary school level, parents are most likely to make decisions about fundraising, though principals and staff are very much involved in the decisions. At the secondary level, parents play a less active role, particularly in Ontario.

Who makes decisions about fundraising:				
	Elementary		Secondary	
	Ontario	Rest of Canada	Ontario	Rest of Canada
Parent groups and school council	91%	82%	47%	67%
Principal, admin	85%	71%	86%	76%
Provincial government	3%	3%	3%	6%
School board	17%	13%	21%	26%
Staff	65%	66%	59%	61%
Students	14%	19%	39%	41%
Other	2%	7%	5%	8%

Amount of Money Raised

	Mean	Median
All Elementary	\$11,560	\$8,000
All Secondary	38,750	20,000
All schools	15,700	10,000
Ontario Elementary	11,100	9,500
ETFO	11,400	9,000
Rest of Canada Elementary	11,800	7,000
Ontario Secondary	33,800	15,000
Rest of Canada Secondary	41,000	20,000

Schools were asked to indicate the total amount of money raised through the various activities and programs articulated in the survey. The median and mean for elementary schools is considerably lower than for secondary schools.

IMPLICATIONS

"The spread of schoolhouse commercialism is part of a much broader trend, the encroachment of commercial interests into every element of modern culture. What sets it apart is the way it subjects children to its influence. And children are increasingly the prime target audience for corporations seeking to sell."

Alex Molnar, "Virtually Everywhere: Marketing to Children in America's Schools."
7th Annual Report on Schoolhouse Commercialism Trends: 2003-2004.

The implications and consequences for public education's reliance on private sources of funding are many.

- Equity: schools in wealthier neighbourhoods can typically raise more money, thus increasing the inequities in the education experience for children.
- Competition for funding: different schools may be going after the same funds. In addition, competing for funding detracts time and energy from the real job of schools – providing a high quality learning environment for students.
- What is funded: an increasing number of items are being defined as "frills," outside of government funding. Playground equipment, field trips, musical instruments, and other

classroom and learning resources are sometimes seen as non-essential. This leaves it up to private sources to provide these services and programs.

- Who is making the decisions: Relying on private sources allows for private decisions on what is funded, rather than public, collective decisions.
- Requirements for receiving funding: some private donors may attach strings to their funding for public education. Private corporations or organizations may require advertising or the use of specific curriculum or other materials in order to access funding. In post-secondary education and health institutions, naming rights are often attached to donations – naming a classroom, a research facility, or a hospital wing for the donation. Will we see this requirement in our public schools?
- Stability of funding: many sources of funding do not make commitments to provide the resources over any extended period. Some require applications on a yearly basis.
- Educational quality control: who is ensuring that the materials that are being provided to schools are unbiased, complete, or accurate?

On fundraising: "With the best will in the world and for all the right reasons, extremely good professional people (principals, teachers, parents, parents organizations) find themselves drawn, step by step, into unconsciously collaborating in the privatization of the public system."

John Ralston Saul
ETFO Lecture, June 2001

While many corporations and businesses act in good faith to provide programs and services in their communities, many questions remain. In whose interest are decisions being made? When a corporation such as McDonald's provides a classroom unit on health, when a trade association such as Crop Life Canada representing manufacturers, developers, and distributors of plant science innovation (pesticides and genetic engineering) offers science resources, who is ensuring that there is no bias?

Public education is about more than providing a private good to individuals. It is about democracy. It is about equity. It is our legacy to future generations. "Public schools are the only schools that must meet the needs of all students. Every child, regardless of religion, race, family status, residence or ability, has the opportunity to be included in a public education system. This fosters a society of inclusion where every child is provided the same opportunities. Public education bonds the segments of society, facilitating understanding and tolerance that cannot be found elsewhere."⁵

"83% of Americans have a more positive image of companies that support a cause they care about. In fact, 65% of Americans would switch to a brand associated with a good cause - price and quality being equal."

Elaine Fogel
"Cause-Related Marketing: Does Corporate America Genuinely Care?"

Public education is too important to risk losing. And it is too important to sacrifice for profit.

Pat McAdie
Research Officer
August 2005

⁵ ETFO, "A Promise to Ontario's Children: Public Education is Not for Sale," 2000, p.2.

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A full report of the results of the Commercialism in Schools survey will be available in Fall 2005. Check the Canadian Teachers' Federation website at www.ctf-fce.ca and the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives website at www.policyalternatives.ca.