

Nathan Tidridge
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February 7th, 2013

Dear Minister Broten,

Thank you for your letter dated January 30th, 2013, where you comment on concerns raised by a November 21st, 2012, mail-out to all provincial legislators about the Grade 10 Civics Curriculum (CHV20) – I have forwarded your letter to all the signatories of the November letter. I wanted to specifically address some of your responses:

- As you know, the only compulsory secondary course that deals with the workings of our parliamentary democracy is CHV20. You cited the Grade 11 Canadian and World Studies Course (Canadian Politics and Citizenship – CPC30), but must know that it is an elective course taught in very few Ontario high schools. Also, this is an open-level course which makes it difficult to market to students seeking only university-entry credits.
- The Grade Five Social Studies section entitled *Aspects of Citizenship and Government in Canada* does cite specific vocabulary that students should know. However you cite the terms *monarchy*, *governor general*, *lieutenant-governor*, *premier* and *prime minister* – none of these terms are listed in the document. Also, responsible government, the Statute of Westminster (1931), Constitution Act (1867 & 1982) the confidence convention and other integral parts of our parliamentary democracy are not mentioned. All of these concepts and terms need to be included in the Grade 10 Civics course (CHV20).
- The specific expectations that you cite for the CHV20 course do not address the foundations of our parliamentary democracy. The Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982) is only one component of our written constitution, and the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* is only one piece of legislation.

As a teacher of Civics I am expected to develop lessons that directly link to curriculum expectations prepared by the Ministry. The Civics' textbooks available to me are lacking in the most basic information. When I asked the textbook companies directly at the fall meeting of OHASSTA why no new textbooks have been produced they informed me that they are waiting on the new curriculum. When errors in their publications were pointed out, I was informed that all they have to do is meet the curriculum, regardless if it is correct or not (an example of this would be the incorrect definition of Parliament reproduced in most textbooks is directly lifted from the CHV20 curriculum document).

You wrote in your response that "Our government believes that learning goes beyond basic facts and conventions." I would counter that without understanding the foundations of our parliamentary democracy we risk creating not only an apathetic electorate, but also an unstable government. There is so much more that could be doing for our students.

As a teacher in this province I can tell you with great confidence that our students are not learning about the basic facts of our parliamentary democracy. I fear that if the fundamentals of our system of government are not addressed in the 2013 curriculum any attempts at citizenship education will be hollow.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nathan Tidridge'.

Nathan Tidridge OCT

cc: Premier Kathleen Wynne, Office of the Minister of Education, Teresa Piruzza MPP, Julia Munro MPP, Monte McNaughton MPP

also:

John Fraser
*Master & Chair of Corporation
Massey College*

Kirk Howard
*President and CEO, Dundurn Group
Past President, Organization of the Book Publishers of Ontario
Past President, Association of Canadian Publishers*

Mark D. Jarvis
Doctoral candidate at the University of Victoria
Co-author of *Democratizing the Constitution: Reforming Responsible Government* (Awarded both the Donner and Smiley book prizes)

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