



Dear Santa

Merry Christmas, Minister Wynne!

On behalf of the 2100 Catholic principals and vice-principals of Ontario, I would like to take this opportunity to wish you happy holidays. Honestly, I'm feeling a little guilty reaching out to you during this season of giving but we really need your help. You see, since the inception of Bill 160, our letters to Santa have gone unanswered. I fear that members of Local 1 of the Elves' Arctic Union have intercepted our letters and kept them hidden from Santa's consideration. We know that Santa still appreciates the myriad of difficulties faced by the education community because student, parent and teacher stockings have been very full these last four years. Sadly, despite the colourful wrapping and bright

ribbons and bows, our gifts all seem to be missing pieces and although the boxes say batteries included, they seldom really are. It is even more frustrating because we have tried so hard to be good. Graduation rates are increasing, student test scores are rising and our literacy rates are amongst the best in the world. Yet, Bill 212, EQAO targets, Learning to 18, health and safety regulations, special education legislation, budget reductions, data analysis, supervision demands, and on and on have made our workload unbearable. So, on behalf of conscientious and dedicated principals and vice-principals everywhere, would you kindly pass on the following letter to Santa's attention?

Dear Santa,

As much as we respect the corporate chain of command, we are having a difficult time getting our Christmas wishes through to your personal attention, so please forgive Minister Wynne for bypassing the office elves. You see Santa, her gifts all came early this year so we're hoping that she has nothing to lose by offering her assistance. Anyway, since it has been a while, thank you for the lumps of coal delivered during the Harris years. The fires still burn bright in many places. We don't want to appear ungrateful for your generosity during the last four years but you need to know that someone has been tampering with our Christmas wish lists. Our stockings are full once again but too many of the presents don't work properly or worse yet, turn out to be meant for someone else. To date, we've been reluctant to shout, pout, or even cry, and you've seen that we really haven't been sleeping much. When we're awake, you know that we have worked very hard to help Minister Wynne and have cooperated with our other partners in education just like you've always asked. So, in case we're too busy trying to make the best of last year's presents to get to the mall to see you in person, here is a short list of what Catholic principals and vice-principals would like this Christmas.

Job Security – *Now Santa, if we're going to keep doing all of this good work, wouldn't it make sense to regulate that we'll all be*

around next Christmas as well? Frankly, we're a little concerned about the impact of the Charney arbitration and declining enrolment. We would also gladly share this gift in the hope that new school leaders would come forward to nurture all of those other boys and girls that write you each year.

VP Allocation – *Minister Wynne and her friends have tried to help but to no avail. All the money that they sent in August has been spent without one new position being created, to the best of our knowledge. We need you to step in Santa. How can we be instructional leaders when the paper pile keeps growing and we keep being pulled from our schools? Have you read the Bill 212 requirements Santa?*

Supervision – *Okay, look Santa, we really have no business telling you what to bring the other boys and girls but enough is enough; someone is really going to get hurt!*

Peace and Harmony – *At the end of the day, Catholic principals and vice-principals care and share and dare to bring peace and harmony to our schools. We promise to willingly let others into the playground to share our toys if they promise not to throw sand when we're not looking.*

*Yours truly,
CPCO*

Minster Wynne, thanks for delivering our letter to Santa and hopefully sharing a smile. We recognize that there is more work to be done, but as Tevye asks of God in *Fiddler on the Roof*, "We are Your chosen people. But, once in a while, can't You choose someone else?" The Catholic principals and vice-principals of Ontario tell me that they can't imagine doing anything else for a living but they also tell me that they can't imagine doing anything more. The scaffold of work is teetering precariously and hundreds of *Humpty Dumpty* metaphors come to mind.

As we enter the holiday season, I pray that each of you find the time to rediscover joy in the laughter of family and friends, to find peace of mind in the knowledge that you are loved, and to find peace of heart in the company of God. As a parent, teacher and colleague, my gift to you this Christmas is thanks and appreciation for bringing light each day to children who all too often struggle to escape the darkness.

*A Christmas candle is a lovely thing;
It makes no noise at all, but softly gives itself away;
While quite unselfish, it grows small. - Eva K. Logue*