



April 3, 2019

Dear Chairperson of the School Board,

We are writing about the student walkout planned for Thursday, April 4, 2019, at public and Catholic schools in some Ontario districts. Our organization takes no position on the walkout's purpose or the message conveyed. We do take a position on the students' right to free speech and free assembly.

The Canadian Civil Liberties Association is an independent, national, nongovernmental organization that has been fighting for civil liberties and human rights since 1964. We have appeared before the Supreme Court of Canada over a hundred and fifty times on issues including freedom of expression, democratic rights and the rule of law.

The Canadian Civil Liberties Education Trust is almost as old as the CCLA. Our teachers have appeared at your schools, teaching about critical thinking and civil liberties, to thousands of students and many teachers too, over the years.

Principals have sent out messages to parents this week about the planned walkouts by students. The principals have cited "safety" as being a priority for your schools. Be that as it may, there is another priority that ought to prevail: critical thinking by students, democracy and our fundamental freedoms.

In the past, schools have managed these walkouts well, with some exceptions. We hope that your schools will not seek to censor Ontario students or otherwise punish or prevent them from expressing their dissent or support for the cause at hand. Your schools, after all, are places where democracy and freedom are taught and shaped for generations to come.

We would be happy to assist in your deliberations on this subject, as we continue to defend dissent, expression and liberty in its many forms.

Sincerely,

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