

Saskatchewan school funding decision headed to Supreme Court

Public Schools of Saskatchewan says it will appeal a decision on funding non-Catholic students attending Catholic schools to the Supreme Court.

In a [unanimous decision](#) March 25, Saskatchewan Court of Appeal has upheld the right of separate schools in the province to receive government funding for the education of non-Catholic students.

The province's highest court overturned a 2017 court ruling by Justice Donald Layh that would have prevented provincial funding of non-Catholic students attending Catholic schools.

The case has played out since 2005 when the York School Division (now Good Spirit) first filed a complaint against what is now the Christ the Teacher School Division. The complaint centred on the Catholic division establishing St. Theodore Roman Catholic School in the rural town of Theodore, northwest of Yorkton, after the public division closed the school due to a lack of enrolment. Parents rallied to save the school to keep their children from being bused to Springside, 17 kilometres away.

The public division argued Catholics made up only a small proportion of the school population and that the mandate of Catholic schools should be limited to the education of Catholic students.

"For more than 15 years, we have pursued every avenue possible, including mediation with government and the organization representing Catholic school boards, to clarify the mandate of separate schools in this province," Colleen MacPherson, chair of Public Schools of Saskatchewan, said in a [news release](#).

"We were forced into the courts and now, with two very different decisions, the Supreme Court of Canada must be the final arbiter."

Education Minister Gordon Wyant said he respects the right of Public Schools of Saskatchewan to appeal last month's decision.

"We recognize that the overall outcome of this issue is important to the delivery of education in Saskatchewan, and await the Supreme Court of Canada's decision on whether they will hear the case," he said in a statement.

Saskatchewan is one of only three provinces in Canada where Catholic education rights are enshrined in the constitution, along with Ontario and Alberta.

Public Schools of Saskatchewan represents 15 public school boards in the province.