School choice in Canada:  
Diversity along the wild – domesticated continuum.

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Abstract:

Policies governing school choice in each of Canada’s ten provinces are summarized and then compared using a conceptual continuum contrasting “domesticated” and “wild” organizations. Analysis focuses on the evolution of school choice in the six most populous provinces accounting for 93 percent of the Canadian population. Ontario, the largest province, accounting for 38 percent of population, emerges as displaying the greatest contrast between highly domesticated public schools and notably wild non-public schools.

Paper prepared for:

4th International Conference on School Choice and Reform  
Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, USA  
January, 2015

Conference Draft. Please do not cite or quote without permission.

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School choice in Canada: Diversity along the wild – domesticated continuum with implications for reform in Ontario.

The objections which are urged with reason against state education do not apply to the enforcement of education by the state, but to the state taking upon itself to direct that education; which is a totally different thing. That the whole or any large part of the education of the people should be in state hands, I go as far as anyone in deprecating. All that has been said of the importance of individuality of character, and diversity in opinions and modes of conduct, involves, as of the same unspeakable importance, diversity of educations.


Mill’s ideal of a “diversity of educations” has been regaining ground throughout the Anglosphere in recent decades under the broad banner of school choice. North American interest was primarily sparked by Milton Friedman’s (1955) initial proposal for voucher-funded choice and competition in education, which stimulated a growing literature and has fueled a range of innovative policy reforms in the USA. Key ideas infiltrated across the northern border where they received a mixed welcome roughly correlated with how recently a province became part of Canada, older members largely ignoring the ideas, more recent members experimenting with selected ideas and one—Alberta—embracing them. Even so, Canada currently offers what may appear as a surprisingly rich range of school choices. Some do not fit comfortably within the orthodox menu of alternatives typically discussed in the US literature as represented by, for example, Merrifield’s (2008) review of “twelve basic policy approaches to school choice” (p. 5). Indeed, despite their prominence in the USA, there is not a single voucher scheme in Canada—or at least not a system of choice officially designated as such—and only a small handful of charter schools. Given these and other differences, the discussion of school choice in Canada offered below culminates in the presentation and application of a broad conceptual appreciation of school diversity that accommodates the variety of school choice in Canada and appears applicable to the USA, and beyond. Before introducing this conceptual frame, the paper begins with a brief overview of the national context followed by a descriptive account of school choice in Canada.
Canada

Canada is a federal state of ten provinces, each with an elected legislature and cabinet government; and three territories, each with an elected assembly and governing council, formally supervised by the national government. In common with other federal states, the provincial legislatures have constitutional authority over education: the territorial assemblies enjoying similar autonomy under the federal statutes governing their operation. Yet unlike other federal states, Canada lacks a national department or minister of education, a national education policy, national education standards, or even national achievement tests or graduation standards, and is unlikely to acquire any of these given the political sensitivities rooted in Quebec’s history and the sense of independence this has fostered there and in other provinces.¹ Canada’s federal government has occasionally enacted legislation influencing limited aspects of education in the country as a whole, the most significant being The Official Languages Acts of 1969 and 1988, which established French and English as official languages in federal activities and led to agreements with provincial and territorial governments to provide financial support for minority and second language education programs. Each province has nonetheless enjoyed sovereign autonomy over education policy throughout its existence, limited only by several important constitutional guarantees, a growing body of jurisprudence, and the influence of the ballot box. In consequence, there is considerable diversity across the education systems in Canada’s ten provinces and three territories, particularly with regard to policies and practices regarding school choice. This high level of deconcentrated authority over education provides Canada’s provinces the latitude to experiment with innovations such as school choice, offering analysts opportunities to study and compare a rich range of different policy approaches within a single country.

Canada’s history, geography and demography exhibit several asymmetries which influence school variety and access. Of prime historically derived importance is the “French

¹ Canada also lacks a national agency dedicated to the collection, analysis, interpretation and dissemination of education statistics. Statistics Canada provides valuable data collected from its broader social and economic surveys and undertakes some limited direct collection of education data, but much of the available data are collected from individual provinces and territories, which typically have differing priorities and have evolved their own definitions and categories. In recent years the Canadian Council of Ministers of Education—which provides a voluntary forum for discussion and collaboration—has sought to address these problems through the Canadian Education Statistics Council and the Pan-Canadian Education Indicators Program (PCEIP), partly to bring greater coherence and consistency to Canadian data but also to facilitate participation in international comparative programs, especially the OECD’s Education at a Glance program. While useful progress has been made, Canada continues to lack the range, detail and focus of education statistics available in the USA. This is particularly so with regard to school choice options, programs and participation. There is nothing that even remotely compares to the NCES surveys and reports on school choice.
fact”. When Britain gained the strategic key to the interior and northern tier of North America with the acquisition of Canada (Quebec) in the French and Indian (Seven Years’) War, she also inherited thousands of previously French citizens. Article IV of the 1763 Treaty of Paris which ended the war guaranteed the practice of Roman Catholicism for these new British subjects. This, in consequence, preserved French law in the lower courts and, over time, led to the establishment of a distinctive French presence in Quebec, northern New Brunswick, and other smaller communities across the country which, in turn, posed education challenges. One of the consequential modern effects of this French fact was the 1969 adoption of official bilingualism by the federal government as noted earlier. Language is culture and culture is education, all bearing implications for school choice. As discussed further below, this surfaces in several ways in modern Canada, each instance being framed by one of two demographic asymmetries. The first is the minority status of French within the country as a whole, with only 22 percent of the national population reporting French as their first official language, 86 percent of whom reside in Quebec; the second, the minority status of English within Quebec, where approximately eight percent speak English as their mother tongue, most of whom are concentrated in Montreal, the Eastern Townships and the Ottawa valley (Statistics Canada, 2012).

Geographically, the three territories of Yukon, Nunavut and the Northwest Territories span 40 percent of the country’s landmass, but are home to less than 0.5 percent of Canadians. The asymmetrical population distribution across the provinces is more consequential, 93 percent of Canadians living in the six geographically largest provinces of, in descending order of population, Ontario, Quebec, British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Further, over half of all Canadians live within one of the 17 largest cities, ten of which are located in southern Ontario or Quebec. Intersection of these settlement patterns with the distribution of official language speakers and the legacies of historical accommodations frame and constrain modern school choice policies and provisions.

School choice in Canada

Recent discussions of school choices in Canada show broad agreement on the main options available, but different authors treat these in different ways. Clemens, Palacios, Loyer and Fathers (2013) recognize the standard distinctions between public, independent (private) and home schooling before subdividing the public sector into four distinct types of government
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Schools which provide various choice options in parts of Canada. Holmes (2008) discusses language-based, specialist, denominational and charter public schools before considering independent schools as his final category. In the course of comparing school choices in the USA and Canada, Lawton (2006) offers a more extensive menu, recognising the choices mentioned above—although with some nuanced differences—before distinguishing between government dependent and independent private schools and adding e-schooling as a distinct choice.

Table 1
School choice options in Canada

A. Public (government) schools

1. Constitutionally guaranteed school choices for designated minority groups
   - s. 93 Roman Catholic separate schools: Alberta, Ontario, Saskatchewan
   - s. 23 Minority language schools: All provinces; QC & NB exceptions
   - First Nation proximity options: Potentially nation-wide, but hypothetical

2. Provincially enabled school choices
   - French Immersion: All provinces and territories except NU
   - Legislatively enabled focus (magnet) schools: Alberta, British Columbia (Manitoba)
   - Charter schools: Alberta
   - Distributed learning: British Columbia

3. District initiated school choice
   - Locally initiated focus (magnet) schools: All provinces

B. Non-public (non-government) schools

- Government aided schools: AB, BC, SK, MB & QC
- Government independent schools: All provinces (legal but none in territories)

C. Non-school and emergent
   (not discussed)

- Government provided correspondence education
- Government aided home education
- Independent home education
- Commercial e-learning
- Independent collaborative home education

Table 1 summarizes the forms of school choice considered in this essay. The categories and sub-categories shown integrate and extend the approaches adopted in the earlier discussions noted above. The options shown in Table 1 are to be understood as alternatives to the designated public school which a child would be expected to attend unless his or her parents actively choose one of the listed options. Not all of the choices shown are available in all Canadian provinces and territories, or in all areas within the provinces and territories in which they are found. And where these options are available, they are not equally open to all families, as discussed below. Section C in Table 1 has been included for completeness but will not be discussed in the present essay.

Neven Van Pelt’s paper *Home schooling: From the extreme to the mainstream* at this conference
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provides an informed discussion of key aspects of non-school instruction, particularly with regard to home education.

**Constitutionally guaranteed group choices within the public sector**

Separate schools. School choice has been part of Canada’s story since the beginning. In the negotiations leading to the union of the four British colonies which became the nucleus of modern Canada, agreement was reached to protect pre-existing legal rights of religious minorities to educate their children in publicly funded denominational schools under the provisions of section 93 of the *British North America Act 1876,*² which brought Canada into existence. These measures ensured that parents belonging to the minority religion in each of the new country’s richest and largest provinces acquired a constitutionally protected right to choose between two kinds of public school—nominally secular common schools or Catholic separate schools in Ontario, and Catholic confessional or dissentient Protestant in Quebec—whereas other parents had access to only their designated common or confessional public school: unless, of course, their circumstances allowed them to choose a non-public school.³

This religiously based system of asymmetrical choice within a dual public school system was contentious from its beginnings and has remained so to the present day. To avoid a repeat of the bitter struggle over French education rights experienced in Manitoba after it became a province in 1870, the separate school model was extended to the provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan when they joined the Canadian confederation in 1905, and was later incorporated into the school systems of Canada’s three territories. The remaining provinces entered the Canadian confederation with public school structures created during their earlier colonial periods. British Columbia and Prince Edward Island joined Canada in 1871 and 1873 respectively, each with its own system of non-sectarian public schools. Newfoundland entered confederation in 1949 with a unique system of denominational public schools, which has since been replaced with a fully secular system. Although separate schools are now only available in the three provinces of Ontario, Alberta and Saskatchewan, in 2011 they accounted for 15.6 percent of total Canadian K-12 enrolments. Fully 30 percent of Ontario students attend RC

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² Renamed *The Constitution Act, 1867* when Canada patriated the constitution (in essence, gained the legal power to amend it) in 1982.

³ New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, the other two founding provinces, had developed alternative arrangements for accommodating adherents of the minority religion within their embryonic public schools, but because these had not been enacted into law at the time of Confederation they were not guaranteed under the *BNA Act* and did not survive.
separate schools, as do some 23 percent of Alberta students, and 21 percent of those in Saskatchewan (Clemens, Palacios, Loyer & Fathers, 2014, Table 4).

Participation in this form of denominationally entitled school choice is subject to differing enrolment requirements in each of the three provinces concerned. Ontario (pop. 13.4M) restricts enrolment in RC elementary (JK-8) separate schools to children from Catholic families, but separate boards nonetheless have discretion to admit non-Catholic children on a case-by-case basis. Anecdotal and media reports (e.g. Brown, 2014) suggest separate boards have been accepting increased numbers of non-RC students in recent years as declining enrolments have begun to bite. No information is publicly available on the extent of non-eligible student enrolment in Ontario K-8 schools, but the numbers are likely quite small. There is nonetheless clear evidence of RC parents actively exercising the elementary school choice option to which they are legally entitled. Card, Dooley and Payne (2008) found the opening of new separate elementary schools in Ontario residential areas with high proportions of Catholics was, on average, associated with an almost a ten percent decline in the neighbourhood public school enrolment (p. 4). Restrictions on enrolment do not apply to Ontario’s separate high schools (9-12), which have accepted non-Catholic students since receiving equivalent funding to public high schools in 1985. Consistent with Alberta’s (pop. 3.8M) open enrolment legislation as discussed later, Alberta’s separate boards admit non-Catholic pupils throughout the K-12 spectrum, subject to agreements to respect the religious nature of the schools. Saskatchewan (pop. 1.06M) enacted legislation in 1995 giving parents the choice of enrolling their children in either a separate or public high school regardless of religious affiliation. As discussed by Eidsness, Steeves and Dolmage (2008), separate boards have been quietly admitting non-Catholic students to elementary grades for some years.

Minority language programs. A little over a century after the creation of the s.93 right to limited denominational choice, adoption of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms introduced constitutionally guaranteed language-based school choices, language having replaced religion as the modern marker of the French fact. Section 23 of the Charter guarantees minority education rights for French-speaking parents outside Quebec where numbers warrant, and extends similar, but more limited, rights to eligible English-speakers in Quebec. This new entitlement led to the gradual establishment of French as a First Language (FFL) choice options for entitled French speakers in all English-speaking provinces, although availability varies.
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These schools are operated by independent school boards. To fully discharge its s.93 and s.23 responsibilities Ontario has established four French public (secular) and eight French Catholic boards in addition to its 31 English public and 38 English separate boards. Neither Alberta nor Saskatchewan have French language separate boards but at least one Albertan French language board (Conseil scolaire Centre-Nord) operates Catholic separate schools as well as secular public schools.

A 1997 constitutional amendment disestablished the dual denominational system in Quebec (pop. 8M), replacing it with a dual language system in which parental choice is tightly limited. Public school students are required to attend French language public schools unless they have at least one parent or sibling who was educated in Canada in English. This rule encouraged the emergence of private ecoles passerelles (bridging schools) which otherwise ineligible Francophone or Allophone parents could choose to obtain a single year of English education for at least one child, so as to gain subsequent admittance to English language public schools for all their children. When the courts blocked an attempt to eliminate this practice through legislation, Quebec responded by instituting a more demanding qualification system which now requires a minimum of three years of private English language instruction to qualify for public school eligibility thus, somewhat ironically, ensuring continuing patronage for the ecoles passerelles.

Less strict entry criteria apply in the dual language school system in the province of New Brunswick (pop. 755K), Canada’s only officially bilingual province. Admission to French or English public schools is available to all with “sufficient linguistic proficiency” in either, both, or neither of the two official languages (New Brunswick, 2004). In practice this accords parents choice to enrol children in either French or English kindergarten programs, regardless of their home language. The number of non-Francophone parents choosing French kindergarten for their children jumped substantially when the government announced the elimination of early grade French immersion programs (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 2009), providing an intriguing illustration of parental interest in school choice.

Total enrolment in s.23 minority language schools accounts for almost five percent (4.78%) of total public enrolment. Taken together the s.23 minority language and s.93

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5 Calculated from 2009 enrolment data in Statistics Canada (2009 Table 2.2 & 2013, Table 1.1)
denominational⁶ public schools account for slightly more than one-fifth (21.27%) of total Canadian K-12 public enrollments.⁷ To these can be added the special case of First Nation families with access to either a Band administered on-reserve school or a nearby off-reserve public school. The number of families in such a situation is unknown and difficult to ascertain, but only a small proportion of the 170,000⁸ or so school-aged First Nations children would be candidates, as the only communities where this would be feasible will necessarily be located in more densely populated regions. Social conventions would probably discourage most eligible families from exercising this form of school choice, but it is another form of group membership school choice that needs notice, if only for thoroughness.

**Provincially enabled choices**

More conventional forms of publicly funded school choices are also available across Canada, although availability varies considerably depending on provincial policy and/or local initiatives. The most widely available choices are provided by French as a Second Language (FSL) immersion programs offered by public (and separate) school boards in urban and suburban areas in all jurisdictions except Nunavut.

**French immersion public schools.** In support of its bilingual policy, the federal government provides partial financial support (negotiated with each province) for two kinds of

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⁶ There are complex differences in how provincial regulations and district policies govern religious curriculum and culture in separate schools. These interact with local expectations to produce what anecdotal evidence suggests could be quite substantial variations in religiosity between individual schools. There has nonetheless been a general trend toward increased secularism in these schools over recent decades. There are currently two surviving Protestant separate schools, the JK-8 Burkevale Protestant Separate School in Penetanguishene, Ontario, enrolling 235 students, and the K-12 Englefeld Protestant Separate School in Saskatchewan enrolling 93 students.

⁷ Estimated using 2009-10 headcount data from Statistics Canada for separate and minority language schools as compiled and reported by Clemens et al. (2013) adjusted for French immersion enrolments using Statistics Canada (2009).

⁸ Statistics Canada (2011, Table 4) reported 167,800 First Nations children aged 4-15 yrs in 2011, which represented 4.5% of the total Canadian 4-15 yr. cohort. Note that the First Nations population represents only 61% of Canada’s aboriginal population, which also includes Métis (23%) and Inuit (4%) peoples [plus 2.7% multiple or other identities, see Statistics Canada 2011, Table 1]. Provincial and territorial authorities have responsibility for the education of these other aboriginal peoples, whereas the Federal government’s treaty obligations include responsibility for education of First Nations peoples (although the situation is further complicated by a differentiation between registered (75%) and non-registered (25%) status). The Federal government once operated on-reserve schools directly or through contract with other agencies, but this obligation is now largely discharged through fiscal transfers to Band councils which enable them to operate their own schools. Canada’s aboriginal population is growing more rapidly than any other demographic group. Statistics Canada (2011, Table 4) reported a total of 256,005 aboriginal 4-15 year olds in 2011 which represented 14.5% of all Canadian children in this age cohort.
FSL programs: core French, in which French is taught as a subject in regular schools, and French immersion, in which French is the language of instruction for half or more of each school day. Depending on numbers, accommodation options, and board policy, immersion programs either operate alongside the regular instructional program within host schools, often called dual track programs, or operate as single track programs in a dedicated school building. Bussing is usually available in accord with district policy, offering an attractive choice for parents seeking alternatives to their designated public or separate school. As one parent who reportedly moved back from the US specifically to access Canadian schools explained, “It’s part of the public school system, so it’s free. We thought it was sort of a no-brainer” (Friesen, 2012).

French immersion programs have been increasing in popularity in recent years and demand has outstripped capacity in many districts. The large Peel District board south of Toronto (c. 150K students) recently capped immersion entries at 25 percent of Grade one enrolment with selection by lottery (Belgrave, 2014). Other urban districts, such as York Region north of Toronto (c. 116K students) and the Vancouver School Board (c. 62K students), face similar accommodation challenges to which admission lotteries are a common response. Although something of a curiosity when initially established in the 1970s, national enrolment in French immersion programs has increased substantially in recent years, exceeding 375,000 in 2012-13, representing 7.5 percent of total Canadian enrolments and 9.8 percent of eligible students.

By attracting students from across wider areas, these immersion programs function as magnet schools, although there are normally multiple sites within urban and suburban districts. Parents appear attracted to French immersion schools for more than the obvious prospect of bilingual fluency which, it appears, may be more elusive than real. Immersion schools attract higher SES and upwardly mobile parents who take an active interest their children’s education. Unlike most other public schools, there are few children on individual special education plans or with behavioural issues in immersion classrooms. Reporter Margaret Wente (2013) characterised their attraction by observing, “French immersion is ... a way to get the benefits of a top public school even if you can’t afford to live near one”. Or, as she put it more candidly, “The main

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9 Some schools offer extended FSL programs which provide additional subject instruction in French, providing another, albeit mild, form of intra-district choice.
10 Excluding Quebec French language enrolments and students eligible for s.23 French as a First Language program outside of Quebec. Statistics from Canadian Parents for French (2014).
allure of French immersion is that it provides all the benefits of a private school without the tuition costs (or so parents hope).11

Legislatively enabled focus schools. Three provinces have adopted legislative frameworks enabling local districts to provide education choices beyond the regular authorized curriculum. Alberta (pop. 3.8M) is the undoubted jewel in the Canadian school choice crown in this—and other—regards. Reforms adopted in 1988 allow parents to enrol children in any suitable program at any public school in the province other than s.23 French language schools, subject to first accommodating local residents. Funding follows the child. As noted earlier, this sweeping open enrolment policy applies to the province’s separate schools, but with enrolment priority naturally being given to Catholic students. Separate boards normally require non-Catholic parents or adult students to sign agreements accepting and agreeing not to undermine the religious character, instruction, and life of their schools.

Alberta’s School Act further authorizes school boards to offer alternate programs of choice to satisfy local demand. An alternate program is defined as “an education program that (a) emphasizes a particular language, culture, religion or subject-matter, or (b) uses a particular teaching philosophy,” but is not a special education program, a s.23 French language program, or program of religious education in a separate school (s.21(1)). If a school board rejects a proposal to establish an alternate program, s.31 of the Act allows the applicants to seek charter school status from the Minister of Education, subject to the restriction that charter schools cannot be “affiliated with a religious faith or denomination” (s. 34(4)). Alberta is the only province which allows charter schools. More consequentially, it is also the only province with a legislative mechanism to actively promote intra and inter district choice by requiring boards to vote on proposals for new programs. A school board must have rejected an application for an alternate program before the Minister can consider granting a charter, but all such applications must be considered by the Minister. Still, the total number of charter schools is limited to 15 at any one time. There were 13 operating in 2014, occupying 23 school buildings, mainly in Edmonton and Calgary (Alberta Education, 2014).

11 Mark Holmes (2008) offered a similar assessment, observing “French immersion usually requires travel out of zone, and it is seen by many as a private education without tuition ...” (p. 200). The social reproduction critique of French immersion programs is not new: an early Canadian study by Olson and Burns (1983) documented significantly higher family incomes for students in immersion programs in a northern Ontario community, arguing that entry into and success in the program are geared to social class.
Many district websites—as well as the Alberta Education site—prominently proclaim commitment to school choice and some provide forms to submit proposals for new programs, but there appear to be no consolidated participation statistics available for Alberta’s alternate programs. Dosdall (2001), an influential leader in Alberta’s adoption of school choice, reported that 41 percent of elementary, 48 percent of junior high and 58 percent of high school students were attending out of zone schools in Edmonton around the turn of the century. Visits to a sample of district websites found there to be fifty or so distinct alternate programs listed for each of Alberta’s larger districts, and dozens or more for suburban and mid-sized districts. There are aboriginal language and culture programs, academic programs such as Advanced Placement and the International Baccalaureate, arts programs, sports and athletic programs, bilingual and immersion language programs (Arabic, Chinese, German and others), faith-based programs, instructional philosophy programs, all girl, all boy programs, and more. Multiple smaller programs are typically grouped together in a single school building, often alongside a French immersion program. Edmonton Public School Board (c. 83K students), which has been a pioneer of school choice and distributed management for close to half-a-century, provides an impressive “Programming” section on its website that leads visitors through the extensive choices available. Even so, choices are markedly curtailed or non-existent in rural and far northern districts. Moreover, boards usually charge additional busing fees for students in choice programs.

British Columbia (pop. 4.6M) followed Alberta’s lead and adopted open enrolment legislation in 2002. The legislation protects a student’s right to enrol in their designated neighbourhood school while according them the right to enrol in an educational program provided by any public school district in the province with sufficient space. The legislation also explicitly permits students to simultaneously enrol in a distributed learning program offered by a second board, allowing schools and students to take advantage of internet technologies to provide enriched learning opportunities. Subject to community consultation, the School Act authorizes a board to offer “specialty academies” which emphasize particular sports, activities or subject areas, and specifically permits a board to offer an International Baccalaureate program. Boards are allowed to charge fees for these speciality programs to cover direct costs in excess of the cost of providing a standard instructional program, and out-of-area transportation costs are not usually covered.
Brown’s (2004) elegant review of British Columbia’s adoption of this policy and its early effects found “clear differences” in the “choice climate” in the 20 districts studied, a few being enthusiastic, a few confused and divided, with most remaining committed to their establish neighbourhood schools. Since then there appears to have been a warming to the choice opportunities created by the legislated permeability of school and district boundaries. A recent study of the lower mainland region by Friesen, Harris and Woodcock (2013) found the proportion of students attending their designated school fell by 13.3 percentage points to 54.2 percent between 2003 and 2006 (p. 14). Visits to a selection of district websites reveal a similar if less rich pattern to that observable in Alberta. One noticeable and potentially confusing difference concerns nomenclature. Whereas in Alberta, “alternate programs” commonly refers to all kinds of choice programs, in British Columbia—and other provinces—this term is used to designate programs intended to specifically cater to needs of secondary level students experiencing attendance or engagement challenges. For this reason, Lawton’s (2006) use of the generic term “focus school” to refer to speciality programs established to meet specific educational expectations and draw students from beyond neighbourhoods or even across districts has been adopted. As evident in the definition, these programs are akin to magnet schools in the USA but are normally established to meet parent or learner interests in alternative forms of education rather than social policy goals such as enhanced racial integration.

Manitoba (pop. 1.25M) has legislation according students the right to attend any public school in the province but lacks accompanying laws or incentives requiring or authorizing boards to establish programs beyond the four official programs established by the province, one of which is French immersion. The website of the province’s largest district (Winnipeg School Division, c. 33K students) lists almost twenty education programs as well as six “alternative program schools”. Many of the listed programs appear quite small and targeted at specific populations, such as the Aboriginal education, adolescent parenting, reading recovery and special education programs, but more conventional choice focused programs are also listed, such as a multi-age, student-centred, parent-involved alternate elementary program available in five schools, as well the more conventional AP and IB programs. Notable alternate programs include the English-Ukrainian and English-Hebrew immersion programs, which are also offered in other districts.
Other provinces have not adopted legislation encouraging public school choice. Saskatchewan (pop. 1.05M) is a partial exception. Provincial legislation authorizes school boards to enter into joint operating agreements with non-profit corporations to host and administer religiously-defined associate schools. Associate schools receive per-pupil funding at 80 percent of public schools. They must comply with provincial curriculum and staffing policies and participate in provincial accountability activities, but retain their freedom to educate from a philosophical perspective different from the secular public schools. There were ten such associated schools in 2010—eight Christian and two Islamic—accounting for around one percent of the total enrolment K-12 enrolments but almost half of non-public school enrolments.

**District initiated school choice**

While none of the remaining provinces actively encourage choice beyond that required by their constitutional obligations or as embodied in the perennial French immersion option, their school boards are able to modify or establish special focus programs or schools as they see fit. Districts typically retain attendance zones for elementary schools, with some boards allowing more permeability than others, and most allowing some choice between secondary schools where feasible. Still, contrasts between the policies of neighbouring or even contiguous boards exist. Pertinent examples are found in and around Canada’s largest city of Toronto. Whereas the Toronto Catholic District Board (TCDB c. 86K students) operates an open boundary policy for its secondary schools, the public Toronto District School Board’s (TDSB c. 257K students) “optional attendance policy” is more restrictive. As noted earlier, Ontario requires separate boards to allow non-Catholics to enrol in secondary grades, thus creating enhanced opportunities for both inter and intra district choice within the Catholic board. Leonard’s (2013) study of student attendance patterns in eight Toronto area districts found that while 46 percent of TDSB students attended a high school other than the one to which they were initially assigned, a whopping 71.4 percent of students in the TCDB attended a high school other than the one closest to their residence. Overall, the average proportion of students in the eight districts studied who were attending other than their assigned or closest high school was 41 percent. This implies more than a minimal number of choice options for these students. The websites of the boards concerned support this supposition, listing various focused secondary level program choices as well as a large range of alternate learning regimes to welcome students experiencing difficulties in regular high schools. The websites of both Toronto boards also list various elementary
programs and focus schools including, in the TDSB, an Africentric school, the Triangle LGBT program and the da Vinci school, which offers a Waldorf inspired program. Although such comparisons are inherently unreliable, the TCDB’s website appears to offer a greater and richer menu of program and school choices than those available in the much larger non-Catholic board, which is notable given its substantially smaller size.

The most comprehensive overview of district initiated school choices in Canada is contained in the documents produced by the Choice and Accountability in Education project undertaken by the Community-University Partnership at the University of Alberta [CACE Report] (CUP Research Team 2004a, 2004b). In addition to summarizing choice and accountability policies in each province, this impressive but now unfortunately somewhat dated resource examines pertinent policies and practices of selected public school boards in eleven urban areas, seven of which are in provinces that do not have legislation enabling boards to establish focus schools. Excluding the Toronto and the s.23 boards operating official minority language schools, there are thirteen distinct school boards operating in the six remaining cities, all of which operate focus programs and schools providing some degree of choice. The greatest variety of options were reported in the five Montreal (pop. 3.4M) boards including English immersion programs in the Francophone boards. The fewest choices were in the smaller cities of Fredericton (pop. 61K) and Charlottetown (pop. 43K). Interestingly, the two Band schools 12 together with the Anglophone and Francophone public boards serving Fredericton provide First Nations residents with a choice between three tax-supported schools.

Non-public schools

All Canadian provinces and territories allow non-public schools, which are officially designated as private schools in some jurisdictions and independent schools in others. A more meaningful distinction is that between the five provinces that provide financial support to non-public schools and the five that do not. As shown in Table 1, non-public schools receiving financial support will be referred to as (government) aided schools and those not as (government) independent schools.

Government aided schools. Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, Quebec and Saskatchewan—accounting for 54 percent of total Canadian K-12 enrolment—provide financial

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12 St. Mary’s Band School (K-4) and Kingsclear First Nations (K-5)
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support to non-public schools meeting the qualifications criteria established in each province.\textsuperscript{13} If Ontario—which accounts for 39 percent Canadian enrolments—were to be excluded from this calculation, then the provinces providing direct financial aid for non-public schools would account for almost 90 percent of total non-public school enrolment. While this statistic may appear somewhat obscure, it gains significance when it is realized that Ontario did provide limited financial support for non-public school parents from 2001 - 2003, before the legislation was retroactively repealed by a successor government.

The level of support provided ranges from 35 percent of per pupil public school funding for Group 2 schools in British Columbia to 80 percent of the provincial per student average funding for Saskatchewan’s associate schools and 100 percent for Alberta’s charter schools. The Group 2 schools in BC receive a lower grant than the 50 percent accorded to the far more numerous Group 1 schools because the operating costs of the Group 2 schools exceed those of local public schools. Alberta also provides two levels of funding—50 percent for Level 1 schools and 60 percent for Level 2—with the difference based on greater levels of accountability for Level 2 schools. Saskatchewan has the most complex system, with a 50 percent rate for its recently established Qualified Independent Schools—of which there are currently 20 or so—80 percent for associate schools, part of which may be retained by the public host board for administrative services, and up to 100 percent for eligible students enrolled in the four Historical High Schools, which are a special case.\textsuperscript{14} Manitoba and Quebec provide 50 and 55-60 percent support respectively. While the details vary from province to province, non-public schools typically qualify for provincial aid by following the official curriculum, employing provincially qualified teachers, complying with all pertinent laws and regulations, and participating in provincial testing programs and other accountability measures. Schools seeking to qualify for grant support are also required to have been in operation for one to three years, depending on the province. All provinces providing financial support to qualifying schools also permit non-

\textsuperscript{13} The Northwest Territories also offers financial aid to non-government schools but there are currently none in operation. The Yellowknife Montessori school is a focus program within the public system.

\textsuperscript{14} Saskatchewan’s historical high schools are long-established, Christian affiliated schools granted special status in recognition of their significant historical contributions. They receive basic per-pupil operating grants at the same rate as public schools, but do not share in the transportation, targeted funding and other selective grants available to public schools. Only permanent resident pupils are eligible for grant support which, given that out-of-province students make up more than half of the total enrolment in these schools, substantially reduces the overall subsidy. Historical high schools are also eligible for capital construction grants amounting to 20 percent of recognized costs.
qualifying schools to operate subject to these schools being officially registered and satisfying minimum standards.

**Government independent schools.** Each of the five provinces that offer no financial aid to non-public schools have evolved their own distinctive rules and regulations governing the operation of these school choices. New Brunswick’s *Education Act* defines ‘school’ as “a structured learning environment through which *public* education is provided to a pupil” (emphasis added) and makes no mention of private, independent or any other kind of non-public schools. Section 16(2) nonetheless declares that “the Minister shall, on application of the parent of a child, exempt in writing the child from attending school where the Minister is satisfied that the child is under effective instruction elsewhere”. Approximately 1,000 students (1.1% of total) receive such permission to attend one of 20 non-public schools each year, all of which are currently within the Anglophone sector. There are no official regulations or policy documents governing the establishment and operation of non-public schools. Nova Scotia has a more explicit and extended set of rules, but requirements for non-public schools are minimal unless the school applies to be recognized as providing a program meeting the requirements for a Nova Scotia high school leaving certificate, in which case the school must demonstrate it is offering appropriate courses taught by appropriately qualified teachers. There were 34 private schools in Nova Scotia in 2010-11 enrolling 3,414 students, representing 3.3 percent of the total elementary and secondary population. While modest, the proportion of pupils being educated in Nova Scotia’s non-public schools has doubled over the past two decades.

Newfoundland and Labrador requires prospective operators of private schools to seek written permission from the Minister of Education and requires private school students to participate in provincial testing programs. Departmental statistics identified only six private schools enrolling a total of 830 students in 2009-10, representing 1.2 percent of total school enrolments. While relatively small, this proportion represents a threefold increase since the province replaced its previous multi-denominational school system with the current secular system in 1998. Four of the six schools are religiously defined, three of these being Roman Catholic, which account for 67 percent of the total private school enrolment. One of these six establishments is essentially a privately operated public school serving a small community of workers and their families operating a large yet isolated hydro-electric generating complex in Labrador. Prince Edward Island has half as many private schools as Newfoundland and
Diversity along the wild – domesticated continuum. Labrador; two of the three are protestant Christian, the other a very small cooperative school. Together the three account for a little over one percent of the total elementary and secondary enrolment on the Island. All private schools must be licensed in accordance with specified requirements, the chief requirement being the provision of effective instruction. This is initially decided through assessment of a written submission including an outline of a school’s goals, a description of the proposed program of study including a grade by grade course outline, and staffing plans. All teachers and administrators must be eligible for provincial certification and the Minister of Education is authorized to inspect any private school and administer tests to students.

Ontario is the most populous province by far, with more than two million pupils. It also has the least restrictive and least sophisticated polices toward non-public schools. Pupils are excused from attending public schools “if they are receiving satisfactory instruction at home or elsewhere”, but satisfactory instruction is not defined in the Education Act or elsewhere. All private schools must file an annual notice of intent to operate and are expected to have common, school-wide policies on attendance, assessment and evaluation and a common procedure for reporting to parents. Ontario does not require its private schools to adhere to the provincial curriculum, although most if not all publicly declare they do; nor are non-public schools required to submit curricula for approval, demonstrate compatibility of goals and philosophies with those of the provincial system, or employ provincially licensed teachers. Except, that is, for private schools seeking to offer course credits for Ontario’s secondary graduation diploma, in which case they must request and pay for provincial inspections and conform to any appropriate requirements. Private schools are not required to participate in provincial testing programs, but may do so for a fee. Given the relative lack of official scrutiny and the absence of any per-pupil funding, enrolment data for Ontario private schools are unreliable and less than timely. In the careful phrasing of a recent Auditor General’s report, “private elementary and secondary schools in Ontario informed the Ministry they had enrolled approximately 110,000 students” in 2012-13 (2013b, p. 180). This is may well be an underestimate, but there is no doubt that Ontario’ non-public school enrolments have increased substantially over the past half-century, rising from slightly less than 2 percent in 1960, through 3.3 percent in 1990-91, to almost 6.0 percent in 2011. There were 22 private Catholic schools listed in 2010, which is surprising given that Ontario has the largest publicly funded, Catholic separate system as discussed earlier. The
number of non-public Catholic schools has been steadily increasing over recent years implying that a growing number of Catholic parents do not consider the publicly-funded Catholic schools to be sufficiently religious, preferring to choose an alternative education which better meets their expectations. These private Catholic schools are predominantly elementary schools: 12 are elementary only and a further 9 are elementary and secondary, while only one school is exclusively secondary.

**Summary.** Table 2 shows proportions of K-12 students enrolled in non-public Canadian schools with the provinces arranged alphabetically by those that offer financial support and those that do not. The proportions for 2010-11 were calculated from Statistics Canada (2013) data that includes estimates of home educated students, and thus slightly inflate actual non-public school enrolments—although the numbers can be taken as a more accurate estimate of students whose parents have chosen not to have their children educated in the state system. The 2010-11 entries may not fully agree with proportions given in the previous text, which were calculated from provincial government websites and other sources as previously reported in Allison and Neven Van Pelt (2012).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Canada</th>
<th>AB</th>
<th>BC</th>
<th>MA</th>
<th>QC</th>
<th>SK</th>
<th>NB</th>
<th>NL</th>
<th>NS</th>
<th>ON</th>
<th>PEI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1988 – 89</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998 – 99</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>4.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>2008 – 09</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010 – 11</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>5.8*</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sources:**
* estimated.

The most notable pattern in Table 2 is the overall increase in non-public school enrolments from 1989 – 2011 in all provinces, including those which offer no financial aid.
Within that group, Ontario is a distinct outlier, non-public enrolments appreciably exceeding those of all other provinces in that group in all years. Ontario, of course, also has a much greater population, so much so that the number of students enrolled in Ontario non-public schools falls only slightly short of the total public school enrolment of Nova Scotia.\textsuperscript{15} Still, enrolment in Nova Scotia’s independent schools has increased at a faster rate than any other province.

As might be expected, four of five provinces that provide financial aid to non-public schools have the highest enrolments in such schools. With the exception of Saskatchewan, this is not necessarily a direct function of the funding provided. Structural features in Quebec, especially a long established tradition of church sponsored secondary schooling in French communities, encouraged government support of such schools long before school choice became a prominent issue. And as discussed earlier, Alberta, British Columbia and Manitoba have all adopted policies to promote greater school choice in addition to providing financial aid to independent schools. As such, the funding provided for non-public schools in those provinces is best viewed as one aspect of broader policies encouraging school choice. The absence of s.93 separate schools in British Columbia and Manitoba also played a part in encouraging those provinces to fund their independent schools, which have always educated high proportions of Catholics. In 2011, there were 17 Roman and Ukrainian Catholic schools among the 59 funded independent schools in Manitoba, accounting for 34.5 percent of aided independent enrolment. All of these schools are located in the greater Winnipeg area and are administered by a diocesan school board. Similar arrangements have been instituted in British Columbia, making the Catholic schools there, as in Manitoba, more similar to parochial schools in the United States than the s.93 separate schools in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Ontario. Even so, Alberta and Ontario have moderate and growing proportions of non-public school students whereas Saskatchewan does not, although enrolments have been increasing steadily if slowly. This difference appears attributable to a more demanding regulation of non-public schools in Saskatchewan and, perhaps, the province’s long attachment to socialist ideals. It nonetheless seems likely that the recent economic upturn in Saskatchewan and the new category of qualified

\textsuperscript{15} Statistics Canada (2013, Table 1) reports a total enrolment of 125,540 pupil for Nova Scotia in 2011-12. A more cumbersome but nonetheless illuminating comparison is with the c. 111K pupils enrolled all public schools in Newfoundland & Labrador, Prince Edward Island and all three territories combined.
School choice in Canada.

independent schools funded at half the level of public schools will likely stimulate enrolments in the future.

A conceptual frame

A typology advanced by Carlson (1964) offers a potentially fruitful theoretical treatment of school choice options in Canada and, potentially, the USA and other countries. Carlson began his analysis by pointing to the importance of relationships between service organizations and their clients, suggesting that aspects of mutual selectivity in this relationship were of particular theoretical and practical importance. This obviously goes right to the heart of school choice.

By juxtaposing client control over participation in an organization against organizational control over client admission, Carlson developed the typology shown in Figure 1. He suggested Type I service organizations, which select their clients by formal or informal means and in which the clients participate on a voluntary basis, are the most common form of service organization in the United states, but this seems less likely today given the remorseless march of social entitlements, and has probably not been the case in Canada for half a century or so. Still, he cites welfare agencies as being of this type, explaining they typically “apply stringent criteria in the selection of clients, and the potential client is not compelled to accept the service” (p. 265). His case examples of Type II organizations are state universities, which are typically required to accept all qualified applicants who choose to apply. Nowadays, schools supported by the purer voucher schemes would seems to qualify as Type II organizations. He acknowledges Type III organizations are likely rare or nonexistent, but agencies that can choose between clients required by law or court order to seek certain services would qualify—such as drug rehabilitation organizations operated by certain charities, perhaps? Type IV service organizations, though, are very common in modern societies, the most obvious being public schools, state mental hospitals, reform schools, and prisons. The clients of these organizations receive the services on a mandatory basis, and prisons, public schools, and state mental hospitals cannot exercise choice in the matter of clients. (p. 266)
Diversity along the wild – domesticated continuum.

There are many fewer mental hospitals and reform schools around these days, but this obviously doesn’t invalidate the continued tenability of distinguishing these Type IV service organizations. Indeed, given the now universal acceptance of inclusion in public schools, they have arguably less choice over their clients than in Carlson’s time. So, too, with the advent of greater opportunities for public school choice available in some jurisdictions, such as Alberta, and specific boards within jurisdictions, such as Edmonton. Developments of this kind serve to move the public schools in question from Type IV to Type II in Figure 2: the clients have more choice, but the schools have less.

Carlson continued by suggesting,

it seems appropriate to call Type IV organizations “domesticated”. By this is simply meant they that they are not compelled to attend to all of the ordinary and usual needs of an organization. By definition, for example, they do not compete with other organizations for clients; in fact a steady flow of clients is assured. There is no struggle for survival for this type of organization. Like the domestic animal, these organizations are fed and cared for. Existence is guaranteed. (p. 266)

In jurisdictions where clients can exercise meaningful choice between public schools, Carlson’s point about not competing for clients no longer holds, at least in any absolute sense; but, as noted above, in such circumstances public schools become Type II organizations, and thus more similar to his type case of state universities. This suggests the term “semi-domesticated” is an appropriate descriptor for Type II public schools.

Type I organizations, on the other hand, can be called “wild”; they do struggle for survival. Their existence is not guaranteed, and they do cease to exist. Support for them is closely tied to quality of performance, and a steady flow of clients is not assured. Wild organizations are not protected at vulnerable points as are domesticated organizations. (p. 267)

To a varying extent this characterizes non-public schools, but there are instances and classes of exception. It appears, for example, that Upper (or Lower) Canada College (or Eton, Rugby or Linden Hall16) are assured of a reasonably steady flow of clients! More to the theoretical point, provinces (and states) which provide conditional financial aid to non-public schools serve to partly domesticate those schools if they agree to be corralled and wear the harness of at least partial state regulation. As is the case in the Canadian provinces offering financial aid to non-public schools, the funding falls short of that enjoyed by fully-funded alternative or other semi-

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16 Established in 1746, Linden Hall is the oldest girls’ boarding school in the USA. Located in the Lititz, PA, it is within a few hours of Philadelphia, Washington D.C., and New York City.
domesticated schools, and thus such government aided independent schools are not comfortably accommodated in Carlson’s Type II category. Instead it seems preferable to think of them as semi-wild, or perhaps partially domesticated, depending on the degree of autonomy retained.

On this basis Carlson’s typology can be sensibly adapted for the classification and analysis of school choice options by placing his notions of “domesticated” and “wild” forms of schools at the opposite ends of a continuum, with semi and partially domesticated (and other nuanced forms) of education provision ranged appropriately along the continuum. One advantage of this approach is that it allows for non-formal-organization-based forms of education to be included along the continuum. Home education\(^\text{17}\) is perhaps the most obvious example, but the other forms sketched in the lower panel of Table 1 qualify.

Table 3 attempts to place the ways in which selected Canadian provinces provide for and regulate school choice along this theoretical continuum. Only those provinces shown in Table 3 as having relatively substantial proportions of private school pupils are considered, with Quebec excluded in the interest of comparability. Even so, the four provinces in Table 3 account for almost two thirds (65.4\%) of total Canadian enrolment.

At least three features of interest emerge from Table 3. First, only Ontario has not adopted a provincial policy of open boundaries, preferring to leave this decision to its school boards. As discussed earlier, some of Ontario’s larger boards have adopted such policies, but the extent of client choice actually realized is unknown and may well be quite limited. The boards themselves certainly do not appear to be actively publicizing, still less promoting intra-system school choice, except for French immersion. Some Ontario boards have also established other types of focus schools and programs of various kinds, but these mostly cater to clients seeking subject emphases, as in schools for the arts and in academically enhanced programs such as the International Baccalaureate and so forth. With the limited exceptions of several programs in the Toronto boards and the little known Eden High School operated by District School Board of Niagara, no Ontario board appears to have established a culturally or religiously based alternate school comparable to those available in Edmonton. And despite the rhetoric encountered in

\(^{17}\) The point being hinted at here is that this form of education is clearly not a teaching – learning process that is based on or delivered in a formal organization, and thus not “school” in the sense that (modern, state) schools are invariably formal organizations. Some new term is needed to get at the essence of this form of education. In an earlier time it would be readily recognized as home tutoring, and this would certainly be a semantically preferable label. Note the ingrained preference for the implicitly misleading label of home schooling is yet another instance of the definitional hegemony of the public schools in modern society.
Diversity along the wild – domesticated continuum.

In essence, then, Ontario’s public schools would appear to be the most domesticated of those compared in Table 3. Further, the legacies of various attempts at reform over the past decade or so have served to reduce curricular and organizational variety within Ontario elementary and secondary schools overall.\(^\text{18}\) In short, as well as being highly

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\(^\text{18}\) A development which has been intensified by teacher union stances and tactics which limit internal organizational discretion by insisting on formally equal workloads and treatments for all their members.
domesticated, the different organizational species of public school in Ontario have been becoming more alike – “inbred”, perhaps.

Second, Ontario private schools are markedly less domesticated than non-public schools in the other provinces compared in Table 3, considerably so in some instances. Some form of public funding is provided for qualifying private schools in Alberta, British Columbia and Manitoba, but none whatsoever is available in Ontario. Nor, with the limited exception of secondary schools offering Ontario high school credits, are private schools required to follow the provincial curriculum, use approved textbooks, employ certificated teachers, have their students sit provincial tests, or submit to provincial inspection, whereas the unfunded private schools in the comparison provinces are subject to some such accountability requirements. The third point recovers the theme from Mill’s epigraph: given that non-public schools in Ontario operate in a less regulated environment than those in the provinces compared in Table 3 – indeed all other Canadian provinces and territories – Ontario can be reasonably expected to have the greatest variety of different kinds of non-public schools. Not only do they operate with a minimum of state regulation, the domesticating effects of conditional public funding are also absent. In consequence, Ontario is a potentially rich and particularly interesting location for the study of this form of school choice – in the wild, so to speak. It also presents the theoretically intriguing irony of simultaneously being host to the most and least domesticated school choices in Canada, and possibly North America. But from a practical policy perspective this is quite consistent: Ontario’s education policy provides a benign, indulgent, environment for public schools and an open yet somewhat hostile environment for private schools (Allison, 2013). Following through on Carlson’s metaphor, Ontario’s public schools are well fed and cared for and their vulnerable points are well protected, while its non-public schools must forage for their sustenance, being completely dependent on what resources their supporters are able to provide.

**Conclusion**

There is a wide range of school choice options in Canada, ranging from the rich menu available in Alberta to the more meagre options in the older, smaller, eastern provinces. The entitlement-based choices provided by Canada’s s.93 separate schools and s.23 minority language school are entrenched in the constitution and—even though separate schools are now only present in three provinces—are integral to the structure of public education in the country. The constrained
choices provided by s.93 and s.23 schools as well as more open choices offered by second language immersion schools are rooted in federal concerns involving nation building rather than education concerns, which is inherently interesting given the sovereignty of the provinces in educational matters. While viewed as anachronistic by some, the current separate school districts provide meaningful school choice opportunities at the secondary level by being open to non-Catholic students: some also offer reasonably rich ranges of specialist focus schools and programming in addition to the French Immersion programs widely available in both public and separate boards.

Provincial enabling legislation encourages program and school diversity in Alberta, British Columbia and Manitoba, but doesn’t necessarily enhance choice within the public sector, which is heavily dependent on initiatives by local boards, as illustrated by the various forms and levels of program and school choice available, for example, in Vancouver, Edmonton, Winnipeg and Toronto. In the case of non-public school choice, Ontario has by far the greatest diversity of choices—from government constrained to ‘wild’—and these schools attract a perhaps surprising number of clients given the lack of government financial aid and consequently relatively high costs for parents.

Although it was not given the attention it deserves, religion emerges as an important factor in the development and availability of school choice in Canada. The presence and aspirations of Catholic communities have not only been influential in the establishment and development of the separate schools, but also in the decisions to provide financial aid for non-public schools in British Columbia and Manitoba. The presence of Alberta’s Catholic separate schools must also have exerted an influence on the development of focus schools defined by other Christian faiths and religions in the public systems. Yet while Alberta’s adoption and promotion of broad school choice policies has reduced the implicit unfairness embedded in the entitlement-based choice allowed by separate schools, Ontario’s less accommodating stance toward school choice has been fueling resentment against the privileged choices enjoyed by Catholic parents of elementary students and denied to others. In this, and many other respects, the current and future development of school choice in Canada provides a rich field of research opportunities.
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References


p. 28 of 29. Diversity along the wild – domesticated continuum.


