

**EDUCATION**

# Incorrect textbooks being used to teach Grade 10 civics

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EDUCATION REPORTER

Ontario's high-school civics textbooks are filled with errors and omissions that have a group of educators worried that a generation of students will grow up with wrong ideas about how the Canadian government is run.

High-school history teacher Nathan Tidridge has mobilized leading educators, including political-science professor Peter Russell and master of Massey College, John Fraser, to write to the province's Education Minister appealing for an examination of the Grade 10 civics curriculum and its textbooks. All high-school students must take the course, which is the only one of its kind in the country.

"There are egregious errors in our textbooks, and it's flowing from a curriculum that is providing no direction," Mr. Tidridge said.

The errors in the textbooks include one that says the lieutenant-governor is appointed by the governor-general on the advice of the provincial premier. The advice, however, comes from the prime minister. Another states that the governor-general holds office for five years, the term can be renewed once, and the role is purely ceremonial. The governor-general holds the office at the pleasure of the Queen and there is no renewal or set term.

Mr. Tidridge said the definition of parliament in the provincial curriculum is inaccurate, and that explanation can be found in government-approved textbooks. The curriculum defines parliament as "an elected assembly responsible for passing legislation and granting the right to levy taxes. In Canada, the federal legislature consists of the sovereign's representative, the Senate, and the House of Commons." The Senate and sovereign representative are both referred to as elected bodies. Further, parliament does more than levy taxes and pass legislation, Mr. Tidridge said.

Mr. Tidridge, who teaches in Waterdown, Ont., worries that high-school students are not getting a proper understanding of how government works from the curriculum and textbooks. More often than not, the course is taught by young teachers with no government or history background, so it's important that the material be accurate, he said.

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mention in the textbooks of Canada's written and unwritten constitution, the Canadian Crown and important developments in the country's parliamentary democracy.

"This is the only chance that they're ever going to get to learn about our government. These students are the future electors in Ontario and in Canada. We're setting them up for disaster," Mr. Tidridge said. "If you change the foundation, which is the curriculum, it will trickle to the textbooks."

A spokeswoman for Education Minister Liz Sandals said a new curriculum is being finalized this spring, and there will likely be new textbooks or new versions of the current ones approved.

Lauren Ramey said Mr. Tidridge's concerns have been forwarded to the publishers. "We always strive to ensure educational materials are accurate and appropriate to students," she said.

One of the publishers, Emond Montgomery Publications, said it had heard from Mr. Tidridge and a reference to an "English" monarchy, for example, will be dropped in all subsequent printings of a particular textbook.

"We take great pride and care to ensure our teachers and students are equipped with the very finest resources available," said Anthony Rezek, the company's vice-president of education. "The suggestions and contributions of conscientious educators like Mr. Tidridge play an important part in ensuring that is the case."

Annie Kidder, executive director of People for Education, said while it may not be unusual to find errors in textbooks, the government has a responsibility to ask publishers to make necessary changes.

"In this case, I think it is very important that kids know how the government of Canada works," she said. "Those are not small errors. Those are real ones, which somebody should have caught by now."

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