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# Racco tackles Tory's plan for faith-based schools

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Vaughan Today

John Tory's announcement about the possibility of including faith-based schools in the public education system is simply an 11th-hour political move, according to Liberal MPP Mario Racco.

And, Racco says, he trusts voters in his Thornhill riding will recognize the Progressive Conservative leader's plan for what it is.

Although many Thornhill students attend faith-based schools, Racco said he's not worried about losing his seat to this issue.

"I don't think (my constituents) are going to buy what he's trying to sell,"

he said from his constituency office following Tory's announcement earlier this week. "People will read what he's saying and evaluate what he's doing and see he is making a political statement to get some votes."

Tory announced Monday that, if his party is elected in October, former premier Bill Davis will be appointed to review and recommend how the public education system could include faith-based schools.

"Ontario has funded faith-based education in varying degrees since Confederation," Tory said in a prepared statement. "This inclusive approach has proven to be successful in managing and respecting religious diversity in public education."

Racco said representatives at private faith-based schools in his riding say they like being private.

"I've spoken to many private schools and they tell me to my face: 'We think we are running ourselves better than the public system,'" Racco said. "Enough have said, 'We can do a better job than you.'"

He added if the province intervenes private schools would have to alter their teacher training practices, adopt the Ontario curriculum and participate in provincial testing.

"And most (schools) say they are not interested," Racco said. "They don't want to join the public education system."

Including faith-based schools in

public education could have a negative effect in the community, he added.

"What (the Conservatives) are proposing is division," he said. "These are politicians trying to divide the community, not unite it."

Racco said Ontario is respected around the world as a great place to live, work and play.

"And it is because we all come together and assimilate," he said. "I am from Italy and I bring what is best from there; someone is from Israel, they bring what is best from there and we all respect the creation of Canada."

"We can't afford to be separated into hundreds of groups. That's no way to build a province."