

## Black-focused schools debate not another nail in multiculturalism's coffin

Canadians' concern should be for minority groups facing discrimination, says pollster and bestselling author Michael Adams

(Toronto) The black-focused schools discussion is not cause for Canadians to panic, says Environics CEO **Michael Adams** who presents a rare, optimistic assessment of multiculturalism in Canada in his latest book, ***Unlikely Utopia: The Surprising Triumph of Canadian Pluralism*** (Viking Canada, \$34.00, Publication Date: November 20).

"Canadians shouldn't be concerned if people are interested in forming neighbourhoods or organizations or schools with others like themselves," says Adams. "Canadians *should* worry if minority groups are facing serious discrimination. For black-focused schools, it's the catalyst behind the interest in them that is important. Are black students and their parents freely choosing such schools as sites of community pride and mutual aid? Or are they so frustrated by the mainstream education system that they're giving up?"

The proposal for a publicly-funded black-focused school is eliciting concerns similar to the ones linked to the religious schools debate that featured so prominently in the recent Ontario elections campaign. The question of whether multiculturalism in Canada is failing (or was ever succeeding) has again been raised. However, in *Unlikely Utopia*, Adams argues that such concepts do not pose an imminent threat to Canadian pluralism; instead, instances of ethnic cohesion can produce positive results for both members of the cultural group and Canadians overall.

"The data we studied for *Unlikely Utopia* shows us that there is a deep fear of Canada sleepwalking toward segregation – whether it be through ethnic enclaves or entities such as culture-specific schools," relates Adams. "One of the key messages in the book, which is critical to the school discussion, is that we should not be alarmed by trends of ethnic groups cleaving together by choice, since this is often beneficial for minority communities and an aid to their participation in society rather than a barrier; but Canadians should be vigilant about exclusion and inequality."

In *Unlikely Utopia*, Adams interprets and presents data collected by his team of pollsters, researchers and collaborators on both Canadians' attitudes towards pluralism and immigration across the country and on the realities of life for minority groups and newcomers in Canada. With chapters on the current situation in Quebec and on Muslim Canadians, *Unlikely Utopia* provides timely analysis of migration and pluralism in Canada that challenges the rampant depictions of intolerance currently dominating the media.

Rather than uncovering fractured remnants of Canada's cultural mosaic, Adams finds through his research that Canadians continue to not only champion multiculturalism but uphold it as an intrinsically Canadian value and source of pride. Throughout *Unlikely Utopia*, he illustrates how Canadians remain optimistic about the future of their multicultural society and how they remain focused on helping others rather than alienating them.

In the midst of his positive report card of pluralism in Canada, Adams is careful not to lose sight of the realities and challenges still faced by immigrants today. *Unlikely Utopia* also includes a careful examination of what Adams refers to as “the facts on the ground.” This entails looking beyond attitudes and impressions to gauge information on issues such as economic outcomes, settlement experiences, and political participation among newcomers to Canada.”

**Regional Media Dates: Michael Adams**

**Ottawa**

Wednesday, November 14

**Montreal**

Monday, November 19

**Calgary**

Thursday, November 22

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