

Same Old Song?

By Jeff Rockwell

I'm old enough to remember that one of the great frustrations with vinyl records was the fact that a small scratch could cause the needle to get stuck in a particular groove, repeating a measure of music endlessly until someone roused themselves enough to move the armature further along. Most of us have a limited tolerance for the endless repetition of anything, particularly when we have absorbed the message on the first or second pass. On the other hand, it is a widely held aphorism that repetition is a key to learning. All of this leaves me a bit nervous as I return to a subject that I, and others within OCHEC, have mentioned more than once in the recent past. Still the issue itself is so fundamental to effective Christian home education that I am willing to accept the risk of annoying repetition to ensure that appropriate attention is given.

With a fall election looming in Ontario, the usual parade of promises has begun. In the midst of the rhetoric and repartee I noticed a policy proposal that immediately caught my attention. The PC party of Ontario has announced that it will offer full funding to all "faith based" elementary and secondary schools if it wins the October 10th election. While home educators were not directly addressed, the ramifications of this proposal are to be watched very carefully. It is critical to note that the PC's have made no attempt to mask their intent to "bring faith-based schools into the public system". Each independent that receives funding would have to agree to "fully incorporate the complete requirements of Ontario's common curriculum . . . (and) participate in Ontario's standardized testing program." In addition, all of these funded schools would require credentialed teachers. In other words, in exchange for funding, independent schools would essentially cede control of the educational process to the government.

Although there is no direct application of this announcement to home educators, it serves to underscore what the leadership of OCHEC has tried to express for several years now. Whenever the government offers money it expects control. Unfortunately, from my perspective, this reality does not send nearly enough Christian educators, whether private school or home based, running rapidly in the opposite direction. The critical element to keep in mind, as difficult as it might be, is that money is **not** the important issue. True Christian education is not equivalent to "public education" whether at home, in school or on the moon for that matter! Christian families who truly desire to "raise their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord have very different curriculum, character and "finished product" goals than do public educators. The heart of modern public education is secular humanism, the very antithesis of Christian faith. So before you get excited about a bit of government money and the perks it might bring, have a very careful look at what is trailing behind it.

This article originally appeared in the OCHEC Summer 2007 newsletter.

Permission to reprint must be obtained from the author and/or OCHEC office.