

“Government-Funded” Home Schooling- Ontario, Take Heed!

By Brenda Rishia, OCHEC editor

Distance Education

Home schooling families in the province of British Columbia have learned a hard lesson. Parents were tempted by offers of financial aid from the provincial government to enrol their children in a distance-education program, and soon learned that they cannot use unauthorized curricula, including any faith-based (religious) materials, to teach their children. By accepting government money, they essentially allowed the government to dictate the content of the curricula. Parents feel that their rights have been violated. Section 76 of the BC School Act states: “All schools must be conducted in a secular, non-sectarian manner and no religious dogma or creed can be taught.” The government does not view distance-education as “private home-schooling” and therefore feels it has the right to determine content.

The parents are given money for resources, while the school district gets the same amount, currently \$5,408, in per-pupil funding for distance-education students as it does for regular students. About 6,800 children partake of this program.

This distance-education program allows parents to teach their children at home using online materials and the professional help of an accredited teacher supplied by their local school district. Ontario offers home schoolers the same type of government-accredited, on-line “virtual learning” program through various school boards. Ontario also has the Independent Learning Centre, which supplies individual courses by mail or on-line to home schoolers. Both types of programs essentially amount to government “school-at-home”, rather than private, do-as-you-like, “home schooling.”

Not only does this affect home schoolers but private schools as well, as some of them also accept grants from the government that can potentially subject them to the same restrictions or withdrawal of funding.

Charter Schools

Charter schools are a growing phenomena. They are public schools, set up by “sufficient numbers” of interested families in a given neighbourhood who desire a school with a particular, specialised focus. They must conform to government requirements for achievement levels. It receives government funding in order to operate, but not necessarily a building or location in which to do so. Alberta is one such province that allows charter schools. For some

schools that offer distance-education programs, they are actively recruiting home schoolers. The more students they get, the more funding they receive, and therefore they can provide more programs, classes, equipment, teachers, and/or teaching materials, etc.

The government still maintains control over curricula, while parents think they get what they want, that is, a specialised “private school” with parental directorship, along with a “home-schooling component” to please those of that persuasion.

The Dangers

Whenever the government is involved in education of our children, they get to call the shots. “He who pays the bills, makes the rules”. It is naïve to believe that by accepting government funding for educating our children at home, they won’t interfere or influence the curricula content or our psyche in any way. We become beholden to them, at the mercy of their whims as changes come about, as evidenced by the situation now occurring in B.C. and in some states in the U.S.A. such as Arizona.

Want the right to home school as you please? Don’t accept government handouts! Participate in events that support your rights! And join HSLDA!

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