



O A C S

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News Release

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Expanding public education by including faith-based private schools is good public policy.

Expanding school choice inside public education is a good thing when it includes faith-based private schools. The Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools (OACS) is pleased with the new announcement from Mr. John Tory, the Leader of the Opposition, in which he expands on a platform announced in March.

Albert Bakker, Q.C., OACS Board Chair, endorses a policy "that includes the principles of fairness and equity, and the recognition that the Ontario government has an obligation to support all of Ontario's children."

The 82 schools of the OACS have been providing high quality education since 1952, employing over 1,000 qualified teachers, and serving more than 13,000 children of families representing more than 55 different denominations.

The statement by Mr. Tory at a Queen's Park press conference this morning concentrated on the appointment of a Public Education Fairness Implementation Commission to be headed by former Premier Bill Davis. OACS Executive Director, Dr. A. Guldemon, is confident that Mr. Davis will find a practical balance between the need for public accountability and the need to safeguard the unique features of the faith-based schools.

Dr. Guldemon sees no difficulty in working within the conditions already outlined by Mr. Tory. OACS schools have been developing the parameters for public accountability for two decades, focussing on professional standards for certification, curriculum and student achievement. He stressed the fact that not all of Ontario's 400 faith-based schools would be eligible for funding on these conditions; although they could upgrade to these standards. Further, the 250 academically-oriented private schools would be excluded on principle since the PC plan is to provide fairness in terms of the Charter-entrenched freedom of religion.

The cost for this program has not been set but assuming that 45% of independent school students would participate, this would be a modest investment of, at most, \$450,000,000 for 50,000 Ontario citizens who are currently penalized for their beliefs.

Mr. Tory's welcome initiative will encourage more interaction among Ontario's five funded systems and lead to an enhancement of Ontario's multicultural heritage.

To find the OACS public policy statement, *Expanding Education in the Public Interest*, go to www.oacs.org and click on "Advocacy."

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