



ASSEMBLY OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE DES ÉVÊQUES CATHOLIQUES DE L'ONTARIO

January 14, 2011

STATEMENT FROM THE ASSEMBLY OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF ONTARIO:

In recent days, numerous media reports regarding the Ministry of Education's Equity & Inclusive Education Policy have been circulated throughout the province. To help provide clarification, specifically to the January 13, 2011 Globe & Mail editorial titled, "Haltingly Inclusive", the Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario has prepared the following statement:

The bishops of Ontario agree with a January 13, 2011 Globe and Mail editorial when it says, "It is not for the Church, by itself, to run Catholic education in Ontario." There are numerous partners involved in the formation of our young people, all playing critical roles in the educational journey: teachers, administrators, parents, trustees, government, etc. In our publicly funded Catholic schools, however, as bishops it is our role to help to weave the thread of faith in our schools by offering guidance, as well as pastoral leadership and support, to our partners in Catholic education on a host of issues relating to the faith foundation of our schools.

We proclaim that every individual, young or old, is to be treated with reverence, and that we are to see the face of Christ in every person. Bullying is wrong under any circumstances and all schools should provide a safe and welcoming environment for each student. Indeed, in 2004 the bishops sponsored the development of pastoral guidelines to ensure that such an environment was in place in Catholic secondary schools for students dealing with the issue of same-sex orientation, long before the government mandated an equity and inclusivity policy.

You will find that this long-standing tradition of equity and inclusivity, rooted in faith and love, permeates the halls of Catholic schools throughout our province.

The debate surrounding Gay/Straight Alliances (GSAs) in Catholic high schools is being complicated by the fact that people are not distinguishing between an objective and a strategy. GSAs are a strategy that some people propose to achieve an objective with which the Bishops of Ontario are in agreement: that all students in schools feel safe and respected. Our objective is that each student be treated with dignity, for each is a child of God. It is not right or fair to suggest that one particular strategy is the only way to achieve a given goal. We seek to achieve the goal of a safe and loving environment for all students in a way that is in harmony with our faith.

The Bishops of Ontario will continue to collaborate with both the Ministry of Education and Catholic school boards in fostering the common good to which Catholic schools contribute so greatly in our province.

Sincerely,

+ Thomas Collins

Thomas Collins, Archbishop of Toronto
President, Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario