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**Accusations About Independent School Credits Nothing More Than  
Fear-Mongering To Boost Enrolment At Public Schools**

*Questioning The Reputation Of The Private School Sector Is Desperate  
Attempt To Remove Any Legitimate Competition*

(Toronto, Ontario) – The Ontario Federation Of Independent Schools rejects the idea that “credit-mills” are undermining the integrity of education in the province and insists the Ministry of Education has a stringent inspection process for schools that have credit-granting privileges. Independent secondary schools wishing to grant credits towards an Ontario Secondary School Diploma must submit to inspection, for which they must pay, when a new school is scheduled to open and every two years thereafter. School associations, like OFIS, work cooperatively with the Ministry of Education to ensure that member schools are meeting, and often exceeding, all provincial standards.

OFIS acknowledges that ministry inspection reports likely contain complaints from the public about credits granted but also believes that those complaints are thoroughly investigated and acted upon. “Inspectors are doing their jobs by entering schools based on complaints and if those complaints have merit, they are revoking credit-granting privileges,” says Barb Bierman, Executive Director of OFIS, “but if schools continue to grant credits after inspection, the complaints must be unfounded, likely lodged for other reasons. As birthrates decline and there are fewer students to be educated, competition for meeting the educational needs of fewer and fewer students becomes fiercer. This is nothing more than an attempt to mar the reputations of all non-public schools and put them out of business.”

It is interesting to note that public schools issuing credits are not subjected to the same stringent ministry inspection process as their independent school counterparts. It is assumed that public high schools are monitored by their local boards with respect to credit validity. It is also interesting that the reasons independent schools give for student success, like smaller classes, more individual attention, varied teaching styles and repetition of materials, are dynamics that the current government has been trying to implement in public schools in order to improve the overall system.

“One could argue that the public knows less about what goes on with public high school credits than those from private schools given the regular ministry inspections,” says Bierman, “and we do know that some of the regular values of independent schools with respect to class size and teaching styles really do make a difference. But it cuts both ways. My own son, who attends a local public high school, repeated a math course in his same public high school this past summer and raised his grade from 68 to 80. Should I assume the repeated credit isn’t valid or should I assume that he was more successful in a different learning environment the 2<sup>nd</sup> time?”

OFIS checks annually on the ability of member schools to meet or exceed the standards of the Ontario curriculum. These schools also have to meet the standards of tuition-paying parents who could just as easily send their children to a local school without tuition. Finally, these schools must register annually with the Ministry of Education and submit to regular inspection upon request and by schedule. With all of these levels of accountability, independent school leaders are wondering when the handful of public school officials, guidance counselors and union representatives will focus on improving their own learning outcomes and ensure that their students are ready for college and university.

OFIS is the largest, fastest-growing, most diverse independent school association in the province and is committed to protecting the integrity and autonomy of independent schools through strong relationships with member schools and the Ontario Ministry of Education.

For More Information & List of Members: Ontario Federation of Independent Schools – Executive Director – Barb Bierman – 1-519-249-1665 or Email - [info@ofis.ca](mailto:info@ofis.ca) – Web – [www.ofis.ca](http://www.ofis.ca)