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Ontario Private Schools Welcome Auditor-General’s Report On
Private School Oversight

Private Schools Welcome Recommendations Made By Provincial Auditor; Disappointed In Ministry Negligence In Current Oversight

(Toronto, Ontario) – The Ontario Federation Of Independent Schools welcomes the provincial auditor-general’s report on the oversight of private schools. Having participated in the audit this past September, OFIS expected many recommendations that might improve the relationship between private schools and the public. The government has a legislated obligation to provide for the education of every child in the province and a legal responsibility to assess the effectiveness of private schools in providing satisfactory instruction. With just over 1000 private schools and more than 110,000 children attending them, about 6% of the province’s students are receiving education at the schools of their parent’s choice.

OFIS acknowledges that there are some individuals and schools that are not properly registering with the province making it more difficult for the many schools that do a great job of academically preparing students for the next step. “It was shocking to read in the report that there are schools that do not register and report properly to the Ministry,” says Barb Bierman, Executive Director of OFIS, “but it was more shocking to read the number of circumstances under which the Ministry does not follow-through with legislated expectations that would only improve the image of the private school industry in the public eye. When they use inconsistent procedures and do not impose deadlines for reporting, they erode public confidence in these schools unnecessarily.”

OFIS will continue to study the report, make appropriate adjustments to its membership application process that are reflective of the recommendations and will provide better information to the public as well as continue to influence government to adopt as many of those recommendations as possible.

“By reading the Ministry of Education’s responses to the auditor-general’s report, there is a sense that this government has interpreted Section 16 of The Education Act in a very minimalist manner choosing instead to focus only on the students who are in publicly funded schools,” says Bierman, “and clearly anything that could be construed as government support for the students who are in private schools will not be considered as action items. Despite the desires of the private school sector for greater public accountability, perception problems are likely to continue due to the government’s prevailing attitude toward private education.”

The Ministry has established seven general requirements for private schools and OFIS collects information around these seven general requirements during its annual application process and reports on them through its website which is updated regularly. OFIS also follows up on complaints received by the public about the inaccuracy of that reported information with member schools.

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

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