



News Release – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Ontario Private Schools Welcome Appropriate Accountability To Clients

Private Schools With Early Learning Programs Have Government Reporting Requirements And Are Directly Responsible To Parents

(Toronto, Ontario) – The Ontario Federation Of Independent Schools rejects the idea that children in early learning programs at private schools are in danger and that those schools have no accountability. In order to receive and maintain a BSID number, Board School Identification Number, all private schools must file an annual *Notice of Intention To Operate A Private School* which requires them to report on all criteria established in the *Education Act*, including the number of children who are beneath the compulsory school age of six years. Additionally, all private schools are required to report quarterly to OnSIS, the Ontario School Information System, which is a web-based application that integrates and collects school, student, educator as well as course and class data at the elemental level.

OFIS acknowledges that the grandfathered exception to the Day Nurseries Act for early learning programs affiliated with private schools established before 1992 creates an inequity between these schools and those which began after 1993 but that reporting requirements are the same. “Children who are in early learning programs in established private schools are well known to the government,” says Barb Bierman, Executive Director of OFIS, “because there is a regular protocol of reporting to the Ministry of Education and there are provisions in the Education Act that make site inspections possible at any time. Private Schools’ doors are always open to Ministry inspection as well as parental inspection.”

OFIS continues to work with its member schools, established before 1992 and with early learning programs, to meet the standards of both the *Education Act* and the *Day Nurseries Act* even though they are not currently required to do so. For many of these schools, there are significant site alterations that will require financial resources and take time to implement. But all of these schools have successful early learning programs, with appropriate ratios of staff to children.

“One could argue that parents are the toughest regulators of all,” says Bierman, “they are very concerned about the safety and happiness of their children and are very savvy consumers who have tough standards of expectation. But it cuts both ways. There is a difference between an early learning program that is part of an established licensed private elementary school and an early learning program that is not licensed anywhere at all. Parents should be extremely cautious of an early learning program that has neither a BSID number nor a day nursery license.”

OFIS checks annually for its member schools to have either a BSID number or a day nursery license or both as part of the membership application and renewal process. Copies of these documents are kept for all schools and all discrepancies are addressed.

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 and the Ontario Ministry of Education.

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