

October 16, 2009

Dear Minister,

We are writing in response to this week's Education Partnership Table meeting concerning the province's School Information Finder.

The Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations, Parents partenaires en éducation, the Ontario Association of Parents in Catholic Education and People for Education, along with every other member of the Partnership Table have all raised grave concerns about the information finder, and are unanimous in their opposition to the site. Equally, all the members of the Partnership Table have been looking for clarification as to the purpose of the finder.

As the four recognized provincial parent organizations, we have been particularly concerned that members of the government and the Ministry have stated that "parents" asked for this site and that this site will in some way improve parent engagement.

We were pleased therefore to have the purpose of the site clarified for us at the meeting this week, and that in the clarification it was also made apparent that this site was not developed solely at the request of parents, nor was its primary purpose to improve parents' engagement in education.

After being questioned at length, your staff explained that the site was in place to allow a public "apples to apples" comparison of schools. We were also told that it is a partial response to the school rankings provided by organizations such as the Fraser Institute and the C.D. Howe Institute – i.e. a way to provide comparisons, but with additional controlled, contextual data.

The clarification did not lead any of our groups, nor any of the members of the Partnership Table, to change our position on the site. It did, however, reassure us that the government will not continue to insist that the site was purposely created in response to parent requests or as a method to improve parent engagement. We appreciate being able to consult and discuss the site in the true light of its originally designed purpose.

Most members of the Partnership Table have committed to staying at the table through this discussion, despite their opposition to the site.

Thank you for allowing your staff to clarify this for us, and we hope to be able to continue to work together to ensure that Ontario has a strong and inclusive publicly-funded education system.

Yours truly,

Aimee Gerdevich, President, Ontario Association of Parents in Catholic Education
Maureen Smithers, 1st Vice-President, Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations
Annie Kidder, Executive Director, People for Education
Francine Mayer, President, Parents partenaires en éducation

cc: Raymond Théberge; Ken Thurston; Mike Jancik, members of the Partnership Table