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Grande Prairie and District Catholic Schools

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May 20, 2009

To: School Council Chairs Parents Educators

I am writing to let you know how concerned we are with provisions of Bill 44 – legislation currently before the provincial legislature. Section 11.1 of Bill 44 would require advance notice to be given to a parent of how and when a controversial issue might be taught in the classroom. Since this would be impossible to forecast in all situations, teachers risk breaking the law when sharing knowledge.

Let me be very clear. We support a parent's right to determine what is best for the education of their child. But Section 11.1 of Bill 44 is unnecessary. The *Alberta School Act* already protects a parent's rights with regard to what their children are taught – and provides a legislative framework for parents, teachers and school administrators to resolve these questions in a collaborative way at the local level.

In our opinion that's where the discussion should remain. Having teachers and school boards hauled before the Human Rights Commission solves nothing. It will only drain resources from the classroom as teachers and school boards are forced to defend themselves in this legal environment. It will also have a chilling effect in classrooms across the province. Good teachers take advantage of spontaneous teachable moments to engage students' interest and make learning relevant. This bill would essentially kill those moments for anything that might be interpreted as dealing with religion, sexuality or sexual orientation.

Bill 44 will come before the legislature sometime early next week --- and that would be the ideal opportunity to amend the bill to remove Section 11.1. Please take the time to let your Premier and/ or your MLA know your concerns with Section 11.1 of Bill 44 – and you want it removed.

Mr. Wayne Drysdale, MLA, Grande Prairie Wapiti

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The Honorable Ed Stelmach

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The Honorable Dave Hancock

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The Honorable Jack Hayden

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There is a handy form available on the Premier's web page
<http://www.premier.alberta.ca/contact/contact.cfm>. If you choose to phone the number is (780) 427 2251 and the fax is (780) 427 1349. Thank you for your assistance.

"We will provide a quality Catholic education which meets the needs of each student and inspires all to live life to their full potential, as caring and competent citizens and Apostles of Christ."