

What About The Home Educators?

After writing an article demonstrating how money has come to dominate the provision of home education in Alberta, leading to the creation of a home education industry, I wrote another one on how the Alberta Home Education Association (AHEA), originally formed to protect home education, may have slowly evolved to become the de facto defender and sustainer of that industry.

However, I must confess that I have not been entirely fair in my exposition of the development of the Alberta home education industry, nor in my wanting to show how the provincial organization has become a part of this problem. Even though I did make reference to what I perceive as the real problem, I did not clearly spell it out.

Alas, my conscience won't allow me to only partially fulfill my Christian obligation to clearly forewarn the home education community that it may presently be on a path, that if not soon corrected, is bound to collectively cause us grief.

Before I begin, may I direct you to the 2015-16 blog series on the leogaumont.com web site, where I took nearly the entire year to clearly explain my concerns about a number of things I perceive to be working together threatening Christian home education in Alberta. This effort was summarized at the 2016 AHEA Convention where I made a presentation entitled "Where Are We Going" ([also available on the web site](#)), which was subsequently delivered at a number of mini-conferences throughout Alberta.

I have repeatedly mentioned that the root cause of our problems can be condensed into a single word, MONEY. However, we should all know that money, in and of itself, CANNOT possibly BE THE PROBLEM, as it is inanimate. The Bible has not told us that money is bad, but that people loving it or having an unhealthy desire for it, is the root of all evil.

Therefore, it is safe to say that THE REAL PROBLEM; the foundational issue; HAS TO BE that the HOME EDUCATORS of this province are breathing life into this otherwise lifeless money, giving it a power it would not otherwise have, that is leading us to misplace our focus for home education. Let me explain.

It should be obvious that the industry that has developed within the Alberta home education community is one that is wholly dependent on money. After all, there would be no need for school boards, ICHESs (Independent Contracted Home Education Specialists), facilitators, nor nearly as many suppliers, services or other related agencies, if it were not for the funding that is attached to home education in Alberta, feeding this industry.

However, let's not neglect a very important fact. Home educators, either knowingly or unwittingly, encourage the development and continuation of this industry by demanding that the government fund home education.

Rationalizing this as simply taking advantage of the fact that other children are funded with taxes that we are all forced to pay, parents fail to see that to accept funding from government is also to acknowledge and validate the government's claim to having educational authority over their children.

There is, therefore, a contradiction at the heart of the home education movement created by a desire for money. On the one hand, parents believe they have the right to home educate and to control the education of their children, and that is a good thing. On the other hand, the vast majority of home educators also believe that the government has the responsibility to fund the education of their children. That is, they believe they have a right to government money. These two opposing beliefs cannot be reconciled.

The parents can't have a genuine right to do something (i.e. educate their children) that is ultimately also (in their view) the government's responsibility. The key question is: Is education the parents' responsibility or the government's responsibility? It can't be both. Most Alberta home educators will quickly answer that it is the parents' responsibility, but then contradict themselves by demanding government money. If it's the parents' responsibility, why insist on government funding? This is akin to asking government to fund the construction of our church buildings so that we could worship God!"! Who, then, is the authority?

Most parents likely don't realize the contradiction, so they can't actually be accused of being hypocritical. Since they are benefiting from the money, most will not really give this much thought.

This contradiction is the cause of many problems. The government funding creates an incentive structure that makes money a central feature of the home education industry where everybody wants "their share of the loot". Parents see the schools or their associated ICHESs as conduits for "their" money. Then, once ensnared, home educators can be manipulated into defending the school board or ICHESs they see as the proverbial "hand that feeds them". And so, the players within this industry will have the natural tendency to do whatever is necessary for its continued survival.

With parents benefitting from the industry, there is no real incentive for them to oppose it. Thus, all the participants benefitting from the same government funding, including parents, school boards, ICHESs, and AHEA become allies, supporters and defenders of the industry. Furthermore, as direct benefactors of this industry, and being in the precarious position of not really being necessary from the government's perspective, ICHESs would naturally find it beneficial to have representation on the AHEA board, where they can influence political action to protect and defend the status quo, in their favour.

If government schools have shown themselves to be perpetual self-replicating systems, it should come as no surprise that a home education version of this industry would also engage in similar activities. This is done using two approaches.

The first is simply to take advantage of the fact that most home educators know little about education outside of the school system they experienced. Rather than teach them alternatives to the school system, providers offer the comforts of the familiar. When looking at this, understanding that a greater use of public programming comes with a greater level of funding, one can see why the industry is essentially committed to returning home education to the government control from which most parents wanted to escape.

With this in mind, should public funding ever be connected to the mandatory use of public programming, it would not likely bode well for traditional home education. If traditional home education was no longer funded, schools and/or ICHESs would likely encourage unsuspecting parents back to using the public programming that pays before advancing other non-paying options. Nearly all providers of home education already offer some type of public programming or accreditation so to increase this offering would not only be in their best interest, but very easy to incorporate in their business plans.

Now let's attempt to summarize this as simply as possible.

First, one must address the world view foundation of the home educator. I am specifically addressing those coming from a Christian perspective.

Parents claiming to be exercising their God-given authority, must also look to Him for their provision. The moment they expect the government to fund their programs they put it in the position of authority. The old adage that anything with more than one head is a freak comes into play here. Either the parents or the government are in authority and whoever supplies the funds, wins.

If home education was no longer funded in this province or if parents were given the choice to notify without funding, there would be no incentive for the continuation of the industry as its lifeblood would be diminished or completely gone.

Therefore, home educators hold the keys to the future of home education in this province. Not only can they put an end to the industry by putting an end to funding (not likely since most home educators choose to be part of the problem), but they can also redirect home education to its Christian roots by avoiding anything to do with public programming (another blow to the industry).

It is not that money is evil, but it can be a real source of grief if those who use it, do so indiscriminately. Without understanding that money feeds the home education industry, uninformed parents often do not see that it can be misused to the peril of traditional Christian home education.

If the vision of home educators continues to be clouded by the cataract of money, I do not see a bright future for home education in Alberta. If you understand the issue and

see the problem, what would you be willing to do to ensure that the Christian home education movement and community can withstand the pressure of a self-serving industry, willing to compromise and conform with the Godless, unbiblical, anti-Christian secular government programming? What are you prepared to do to ensure that your children and grandchildren can continue to learn about God at home? Do you know what it means to be in authority under God? I sincerely hope that you understand it to be much different than the abdication of that authority to government and the associated multitude of marketing merchants.

The future has always been in our hands. It is a question of the use or misuse of public money and/or public programming. Both will diminish Christian home education from being a ministry to being an industry.

Let us work together to ensure it is never lost to those whose motivation is self-serving and whose vision is limited by temporal goals.

(Written by Léo Gaumont with assistance from Dr. Michael Wagner)

Post-script

In late 2017, the NDP Government of Alberta passed Bill 24 which effectively bars parents from being informed of what club a child attends in school. Parents believing they have authority over their children's education find this law egregious to parental rights.

Nearly every public and catholic school has acquiesced to the Minister of Education's demands that they adopt his position and publicly display their subservience to them. Therefore, any home education provision through these schools, including Families Learning Together, THEE, Centre for Learning at Home, School of Hope, Argyll, etc., is not in imminent danger. However, home educators registered with private schools that are resisting the Ministerial order may be in danger as he has threatened to withhold funding and/or accreditation to any school deemed to be non-compliant.

One would have to wonder what the motivation behind Trinity Christian School and their associate Wisdom Home Schooling's complete capitulation to the Minister's demand could be. Could it be it to protect home education or to assure their continued survival should the Minister make good on his threats?