

GOVERNMENT OF ALBERTA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
MINISTERIAL ORDER (# 017/2017)

I, David Eggen, Minister of Education, pursuant to Section 41(5) of the *School Act* make the Order in the attached Appendix.

DATED at Edmonton, Alberta _____, 2017

MINISTER OF EDUCATION

APPENDIX
MINISTERIAL ORDER (#017/2017)
SCHOOL ACT

**IN THE MATTER OF AN INQUIRY PURSUANT TO SECTION 41 OF
THE SCHOOL ACT RSA 2000, c S-3 into Harvest Baptist Academy and
Meadows Baptist Academy, two private schools operated by
Independent Baptist Christian Education Society [Society]**

WHEREAS:

- A. Students are entitled to welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environments that respect diversity and nurture a sense of belonging and a positive sense of self (Preamble, *School Act*);
- B. Students are entitled to the support of their school in establishing gay-straight alliances, and upon consulting with the principal, to select a respectful and inclusive name for the organization, including the name “gay-straight alliance” (GSA) or “queer-straight alliance” (QSA) (section 16.1, *School Act*);
- C. On November 9, 2015, private schools, including the Harvest Baptist Academy and the Meadows Baptist Academy, were informed of their responsibility to comply with Section 16.1 of the *School Act* and were asked to submit their aligned policies, together with any related administrative procedures or regulations to the Minister by March 31, 2016;
- D. The Society responded March 23, 2016, with an anti-bullying policy and guidelines that did not specifically address the rights of students to form GSAs or QSAs. The Society further stated by cover letter that GSAs are incompatible with their Christian beliefs, and the mission, purpose, and character of their Christian schools, and there is no interest in, or need for GSAs in their schools;
- E. A Section 41 inquiry was commissioned September 23, 2016, to inquire into the schools operated by the Society. The resulting report, received on November 14, 2016, concluded that the Society is opposed to GSAs under Section 16.1 of the *School Act* and has clearly stated its intention not to comply;
- F. The resulting report noted that no student has yet requested a GSA to trigger obligations under Section 16.1 but concluded that the position of the Society and its Chairman on GSAs will have a significant chilling effect on any student who might want to make a request for a GSA in the future.

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Pursuant to Section 41(5) of the *School Act*, I hereby order that:

The Society shall:

- (a) permit the establishment of student organizations or the holding of activities pursuant to Section 16.1 at its schools;
- (b) ensure a staff member will be designated to act as a liaison to facilitate the establishment, and the ongoing operation, of the student organization, or to assist in organizing the activity;
- (c) support student decisions for a respectful and inclusive name for the organization, including the name “gay (or-queer)-straight alliance” after consulting with the principal.