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## Teach Darwin, Quebec tells evangelicals

Province gets tough with schools that stray from set curriculum on theory of evolution

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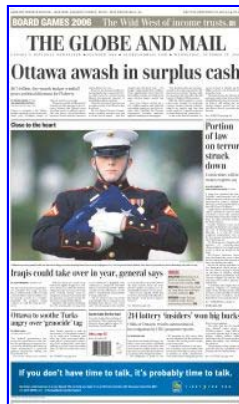
TORONTO, QUEBEC -- Quebec has launched a crackdown on unlicensed evangelical schools, saying the province will shut down any institution that does not follow the provincial curriculum and teach Darwinism.

Education Minister Jean-Marc Fournier said yesterday some evangelical schools have been operating illegally in the province and teaching their own curriculum. All Quebec schools require a permit to instruct students.

"Schools that have a permit must of course follow the curriculum, which includes the teaching of Darwin's theory of evolution," Mr. Fournier said.

Elsewhere in Canada, governments tend not to interfere with what is taught in independent schools, unless a particular school is using the provincial curriculum.

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Vern Rand, acting superintendent of Koinonia Christian Schools, said his nine evangelical, non-denominational schools in Alberta follow the provincially approved curriculum. Students are taught from a Christian worldview, but in biology class, for example, they also learn about evolution.

"We do teach the theory of evolution and we teach the truth of creation," Mr. Rand said. "We just feel that in order for students to be informed, they need to know both. And to really stress one at the expense of others, is that education?"

Ontario Education Minister Kathleen Wynne said in an interview that if faith-based or private high schools have adopted the ministry curriculum and want their students to graduate with a provincial diploma, they are subject to an inspection to ensure they meet guidelines.

As for the other independent schools, Ms. Wynne said: "Private schools maintain their independent autonomy over their curriculum. That's something we have not decided to change at this point."

There are 140 private schools registered with the province.

Ms. Wynne said a curriculum council, to be established in the new year, may look at the issue of teaching Darwin's theory of evolution and creationism. But if any recommendations are made, she said, they would apply only to those private schools using the provincial curriculum.

Elaine Hopkins, executive director of the Ontario Federation of Independent Schools, which represents nearly 900 institutions in the province, said many religious schools in Canada, and especially in Ontario, tend to teach their own particular philosophical position, and are not required to instruct students on Darwin's theory of evolution.

Still, Ms. Hopkins said "in a number of Christian schools, they will teach that there are a variety of theories of how the Earth was created. But they will also say, 'We know and believe that God created the world.' "

Leo Van Arragon, principal of Redeemer Christian High School in Ottawa, said it would be a disservice to students not to explore the theory of evolution in science and history, even though the school also teaches creationism.

"I've had parents ask me about it [teaching both creationism and evolution]," Mr. Van Arragon said. "It's part of the language of culture. And in my opinion, God forgive me, it would be silly not to deal with it."

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