

## A Critique of “Notification Only”

Alberta now has “Notification Only” as a home education option. Although it is counterproductive to question the motives of those who proposed, or those who accepted and implemented it, there are a few simple things one must consider before proceeding with this newly minted “Choice in Education”. The main question is, what problem(s) were being addressed with “Notification Only”?

Was “Notification Only” advanced to mitigate the persecution of home educators? This problem has been pretty well non-existent for over thirty years as there has been virtually no opposition to home education since the passing of the School Act in 1988 when home educators were given the right to escape hostile jurisdictions and go to supportive schools. This, along with the funding of home education makes this province one of the friendliest. Therefore, it is most unreasonable to believe this to be the impetus for “Notification Only”.

Nevertheless, was “Notification Only” advanced to solve other issues in home education? The answer is yes, but was anything truly changed or accomplished? There are three issues that need addressing.

### Parental Authority In Education

While this is a legitimate concern, it was clearly not addressed with “Notification Only”. We need to understand that the government claims authority over the children’s education with a yearly obligation to register or notify all students between the ages of six and sixteen. What exactly is being solved when parents who were obligated to register their children with a school on a yearly basis, now have the option to register directly with the government, on a yearly basis? Either way, parents seek permission from the government to proceed with what God clearly authorized and directed parents to do. “Notification Only” continues to validate the government’s claim to greater authority than parents.

### Funding Home Education

While “Notification Only” provides the opportunity for parents to “decouple” from governmental funding, this has always been available. Parents registering through the existing status quo school system have the option of declining home education funding. Some do, in a partial compliance, declaring some level of autonomy while respecting the government’s compelling interest in the education of its citizen students. Whether registered through a school or directly with government, “Notification Only” changed nothing respecting the option of conducting a of home education program without funding.

## School Supervision

This may be the only place where “Notification Only” offers something different from the existing status quo home education option, yet it begs the question of how exactly it can be beneficial to home educating parents and students.

To start, the existing arrangement puts a buffer or distance between the parents and the government with a school board, school and facilitator intermediary, whereas “Notification Only” puts parents directly under government oversight. Schools have a compelling interest in keeping parents happy as returning students means continuing income. Also, school provided facilitators are likely to have at least some familiarity with home education, while a bureaucrat likely doesn't.

It should be noted that parents registered through a school can refuse funding, visits or services provided by the school. Furthermore, parents have always had the option of changing or “firing” both their facilitators and/or the school with which they were enrolled and seek alternate arrangements, if either failed them.

## So What Was Accomplished With “Notification Only”?

Actually, nothing of any significance. Certainly nothing that acknowledges parental authority over the education of their children. Notification continues to be a yearly exercise whether with a school through which a (friendly) facilitator is provided OR directly with the government under the supervision of a “Director” with the power to end a home education program. Nothing was accomplished or changed respecting funding.

The big question then becomes, why, when parents gain no greater authority or autonomy from government and who never had to accept funding, while subjecting themselves to the unilateral supervisory dictates of an unnamed “Director”, could anybody see “Notification Only” as an improvement over the existing status quo system? In the end, I believe that the impetus for “Notification Only” is largely based on the illusion or “belief” that greater parental control and freedom is attained. Yet, likely few, if any, opting for this pathway could clearly describe it, explain its workings or demonstrate its advantage!

While some parents may see this as a victory, has anyone squared AHEA's recent push to become a “Christian” organization when further validating government claims to authority in education? Would God give parents children and then instruct them to do so according to government dictates?

One final question. Were you or anybody you know consulted or given opportunity to speak respecting this matter? I didn't think so!