



## Press Release

Toronto, December 8, 2011

### **Metropolitan Community Church of Toronto supports Accepting Schools Act, 2011**

The Metropolitan Community Church of Toronto strongly supports Ontario's recently-proposed anti-bullying legislation, the Accepting Schools Act, 2011. According to Senior Pastor, Rev. Dr. Brent Hawkes, C.M., "As people of faith, we support anti-bullying education and legislation. We have seen first-hand the devastating damage of bullying in the lives of young people – we have all seen far too many teen suicides – and there is a huge need for stronger action to create a safer and more inclusive environment in all schools. This legislation is a positive step forward."

To quote the Act, "all students should feel safe at school and deserve a positive school climate that is inclusive and accepting, regardless of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, family status or disability...[and]... a healthy, safe and inclusive learning environment where all students feel accepted is a necessary condition for student success."

Some fundamentalist religious voices have been raised against the Act to characterize it as a requirement that publicly-funded boards "host gay clubs." They see the Act as an infringement of "freedom of religion." But these fundamentalists are not the voice of all churches in Canada. The Metropolitan Community Church of Toronto along with many other faith communities believes that freedom of religion should never be used as an excuse to deny basic human rights. According to Rev. Dr. Hawkes, "Most people of faith are in favour of *more* justice for young people, not less."

For further information, please contact Rev. Dr. Brent Hawkes, C.M., by phone at 416 406 6228 ext 107 or by email at [bhawkes@mcctoronto.com](mailto:bhawkes@mcctoronto.com).

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