



# Catholic CIVIL RIGHTS League

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## Food for Children founders honoured with CCRL award

The League is pleased to announce that it has conferred its Archbishop Adam Exner Award on Dr. Andrew A. Simone and Joan Simone, founders of Canadian Food for Children. The League award recognizes Catholic excellence in public life. The award was presented at the League's annual Spring dinner in Toronto June 10.

"We are very honoured to be chosen for this award," said Dr. Simone. "Everything we have done has been centered on our Catholic faith, in loyalty to the Magisterium."

Dr. and Mrs. Simone established Canadian Food for Children (CFFC) in 1985 after almost 10 years of divesting themselves of most of their assets and donating heavily to charitable ventures. Mother Teresa encouraged them to collect and distribute food to those in need, since many foods are simply not available in missionary areas.

The Simones then began contacting companies to donate non-perishables that cannot be sold in Canada due to minor errors in packaging or



Joanne McGarry, CCRL executive director; Mrs. Simone and Dr. Simone; Phil Horgan, CCRL president

labeling, for example. Individuals, schools and churches donate money and grocery items. From humble beginnings, CFFC now ships more than five million kilograms of food and other necessities per year to children in some 30 countries worldwide for distribution by local missionaries. The charity has thousands of volunteers across Canada, but no paid staff.

"The achievements of Dr. and Mrs. Simone in living simply in order to share with the needy, and providing leadership in a much-needed initiative, are a true inspiration to all of us," said League President Philip Horgan. "CFFC is a true example of faith in action, and we know that countless children are living healthy lives because of their efforts."

Dr. Simone, who maintains a dermatology practice in Toronto, and Mrs. Simone, are members of the Order of Canada and recipients of the Papal Cross, Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice, as well as the Christian Stewardship Award, St. Anthony's International Award for Solidarity with the Poor and William Kurelek Award. They have 13 children and 30 grandchildren, and are members of Our Lady of Sorrows parish in Toronto.

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## Appeal denied in union dues diversion case

The appeal of Susan Comstock, a League member who sought a diversion of mandatory union dues on conscientious grounds, has been unsuccessful.

The appeal, dismissed without costs by the Federal Court of Appeal immediately after four and a half hours of argument on May 28, comes after a four-year struggle by Mrs. Comstock, a long time employee of the federal government. Through a provision of her collective agreement with the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC), she had sought to divert her mandatory union dues to charity because of the union's direct and active support for same sex "marriage," and its zero tolerance policies against what it termed homophobia and heterosexism. In her application, she argued that this advocacy violated her conscience as a Roman Catholic and was therefore unacceptable.

Phil Horgan, president of the League, said that "PSAC by its advocacy has maintained that the collection of its union dues and support of contentious moral issues such as same sex marriage are more important than accommodating religious or conscientious objections of its members." He

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## Unborn victims of violence update

Bill C-484, which would recognize a separate crime when a fetus is killed or injured in the course of an attack on his or her mother, is now awaiting hearings by the House of Commons Justice and Human Rights Committee. This Committee will probably hear witnesses, scrutinize the Bill very closely, perhaps amend it, and recommend whether it will be sent back to the House for third and final reading. This is unlikely to happen before Fall or Winter. In the meantime, the campaign of misinformation about this bill continues, with abortion advocates, as well as MPs and union leaders sympathetic to their cause, insisting it is a first step to re-criminalizing abortion. In fact, the bill specifically excludes abortion and merely seeks to recognize the pain and suffering of family members who have lost mothers and their unborn children to violence. The battle is likely to continue throughout the summer, particularly on letters' pages in local newspapers. The League encourages its supporters to promote the truth about this Bill, and ask their MPs to support it. At least 25,000 signatures have already been presented in Parliament in support of Bill C-484. ■



## EDITOR'S MESSAGE

By Joanne McGarry

As you'll see in our national roundup section (Page 4), and also in our page one story about a League member's unsuccessful attempt to divert her union dues to the Church to protest union advocacy, some basic freedoms are under attack in Canada. The challenge to Catholic Insight Magazine, and the judgements against Stephen Boissoin, Susan Comstock, marriage commissioner Orville Nichols and others, are of concern not only because of the infringement on freedom of expression and freedom of religion, but also because these problems were predictable and could be corrected with political will.

The mainstream media have only recently awakened to the threat posed by the use of our human rights' commissions in free speech cases, no doubt due to charges involving high profile cases such as Mark Steyn and Maclean's Magazine, and Ezra Levant and the now-defunct Western Standard Magazine. But the threat has been there ever since well-intentioned but open-to-interpretation statutes on hate speech were added to our laws. In particular, Section 13 of the Canadian Human Rights Act, which addresses "hate messages," was expanded to include the Internet in 2001. The League warned then that such inclusion could have a chilling effect on the normal debate of contentious issues, especially those with religious and moral overtones. Likewise, throughout the series of court judgements and Parliamentary debates that led to the re-definition of marriage to include same sex unions in 2005, the League warned that such legalization would create problems and penalties for religious organizations opposed to the change, especially on matters such as the dissemination of Church teaching, the use of Church property for the solemnization or celebration of marriage, and the rights of Church organizations to insist on the teachings of their faith in matters of employment.

As League members will recall, raising these concerns caused us to be criticized for opposing equality and being "homophobic" in some quarters. Even some Catholics who essentially agreed with us on the question of marriage said our predictions were somewhat alarmist.

We only wish we had been wrong. The reform of Human Rights Commissions, through the elimination or re-interpretation of Section 13, should be a top priority for everyone who values religious freedom. We hope all our members will make a point of discussing it with their MPs, both during the summer and in any future election campaign.

\* \* \*

In spite of these serious concerns, we're pleased to report positive developments as well. The Ontario legislature, for example, has voted to keep its daily reading of the Lord's Prayer. As you'll recall, Premier Dalton McGuinty surprised many people earlier this year by saying that the daily recitation of the prayer was out of date and not reflective of the province's religious mix. He appointed an all-party committee to examine the issue.

That committee received more than 30,000 signatures on petitions, letters and e-mails, asking the legislature to keep the Lord's Prayer. We thank the many League members who participated in this campaign and are pleased that it has been successful. As we said in our press release of June 12, this groundswell of support shows the importance people attach to prayer, and to their traditions.

We're also pleased to report on the recipients of our annual Archbishop Exner Award for Catholic Excellence in Public Life (page one). Dr. and Mrs. Simone's story, and the growth of Canadian Food for Children, is a truly inspiring example of faith in action.

The League extends best wishes for a safe and relaxing summer vacation period.

*President Emeritus Tom Langan and his wife Janine are on vacation. Tom's column will resume in the Fall. ■*

2008  
J U N E

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# REGIONAL ROUNDUP

## Windsor-Essex chapter holds Spring meeting

More than 40 people were present for the Chapter Meeting of May 14, which featured presentations by CCRL Executive Director Joanne McGarry, pro-life advocate Marianne Goudreau, and recent Catholic convert Owen Swain. This was Joanne's first visit to the Chapter, and she was welcomed warmly by the local chapter and attendees who expressed appreciation for all her continuing efforts.

Joanne reviewed a number of the League's activities, particularly dealing with recent employment related court and tribunal decisions, as well as the proliferation of sexual and violent content in traditional family television time. Marianne spoke to the defence of the pre-born. She provided a thorough mix of factual information and moral imperatives challenging our society. She highlighted the compelling need for Catholics to act in the protection of the sanctity of life from the moment of conception. Owen gripped the audience in recounting his journey to Catholicism. The words of Jesus himself about the Eucharist, coupled with Owen's spiritual desire for the Eucharistic Real Presence, led Owen to give up his ordained minister status within the sola fide and sola scriptura church of his upbringing. Infused with many humorous observations and intriguing insights, Owen spoke to the modern relevancy and continued importance of Catholic teaching in dealing with current societal problems.

The meeting was held at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel parish, and has served to inspire additional interest in the League's activities. Windsor-Essex County Chapter holds meetings in different locations to respond to interested parish groups and to spur wider diocesan support. Next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, September 10th at St. Gregory the Great parish in Tecumseh, followed by the year's last meeting on Wednesday, November 12th [venue to be announced]. The chapter's meeting format has evolved into first conducting essential Chapter business matters, followed by special presentations, thereafter adjourning to the closest K of C Hall for "Afterchat". Attendees and presenters have an informal opportunity to meet and discuss the presentations, exchange views, and share their thoughts in more detail.

The Chapter's outreach activities extended to displaying for the first time at a Catholic high school activities fair. Chapter Executive member Amy Charron shared information about the League's activities and mission with many Cardinal Carter students in Leamington. Executive members Bob and Pam Baksi traveled to Ottawa to march in and demonstrate support for the National March for Life. Bob recently spoke to a regional managers' meeting of Society of St. Vincent de Paul on the topic of Human Rights in the Ontario workplace. The presentation included a review of the implications to Catholic faith based organizations of the recent Christian Horizons ruling made by the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal. The chapter remains active in letter writing, membership development, and in bringing to the attention of national office events and activities of interest to the League. New members to the chapter from throughout the Diocese of London are welcome, and readers are encouraged to contact the chapter (robert@baksi.com) directly for more information about meetings or other involvement. ■

## Antigonish chapter

President Don MacLellan, Vice-President Tom Roach and other chapter representatives participated in the local March for Life in May at Province House. The chapter is encouraging local residents to consider dropping their subscriptions to the Chronicle-Herald, even for a short time, in response to serious anti-Catholic content in a March 22 column, and the absence of any answer from the publisher or editor to the chapter's concerns. The chapter is also encouraging good candidates to stand for election this October to the Strait Regional School Board, which has been disbanded by the Minister of Education.

The chapter's annual barbecue is scheduled for Sunday, July 27 at Arisaig Community Hall, beginning with Mass at 4 pm at St. Margaret of Scotland Church. From September to June, meetings take place the second Tuesday of each month. Please contact Don (don\_maclellan@hotmail.com) for further information. ■

## BC Region

The League has shipped many copies of Making Space, Giving Voice, its review of the province's curriculum changes implemented under terms of the Corren agreement. The document, which has been favourably reviewed by educators, provides detailed information about the agreement itself, as well as the challenges posed by the new curriculum. It is available on our website, under BC Region.

Director Sean Murphy addressed the Vancouver CWL archdiocesan convention in May, focusing on the agreement and its impact on parental authority. He also discussed how changes in the social landscape over the past 40 years, including the devaluing of marriage and family life, helped pave the way for today's challenges. He urged those with children in the school system to be active in school councils and to work with elected officials to effect change. ■

## A lasting gift

Your bequest to the League will help us continue our apostolate for future generations. Our legal name for this purpose is "Catholic Civil Rights League of Toronto, Ontario." Feel free to contact us at any time for assistance in arranging this type of gift.

## Human Rights challenges grow

Many cases involving freedom of religion and freedom of speech are currently in front of Canada's federal or provincial human rights commissions. The cases against Mark Steyn and Maclean's Magazine, and Ezra Levant, former publisher of The Western Standard, are high-profile and have caused the greatest explosion of comment in the press and in the blogosphere. Almost all of that reaction has been favourable to some reform of the commissions, and their tribunals, so that cases involving basic Charter freedoms are not heard there. However, the response from governments has not been reassuring.

The League corresponded several times with Justice Minister Rob Nicholson, and only got a reply in early June, after PC backbencher Rick Dykstra introduced a motion – which may or may not succeed – to have the role and mandate of the CHRC examined. The resolution was directed primarily to the interpretation and application of provisions relating to Section 13, which covers the electronic transmission of so-called “hate” speech. The inquiry, which would be headed by the Justice and Human Rights Committee, would include examination of the CHRC's investigative techniques and its interpretation and application of Section 13. As Civil Right went to press, the CHRC announced that it will begin a review of Section 13 immediately.

The League supports the removal or significant re-interpretation of Section 13 in order to safeguard freedom of religion and freedom of speech while preserving the equality of all people in the provision of goods and services. We urge all our readers to share their concerns with their MPs. What follows is a sampling of current cases that raise serious concerns about such freedom. ■

## Catholic Insight feels burden of human rights complaints

Catholic Insight (CI) Magazine, edited by League co-founder Father Alphonse De Valk, has been burdened by \$20,000 in legal costs in the process of defending itself against a campaign of harassment - including a human rights complaint - launched by activists engaged in promoting the “gay rights agenda.”

CI is currently the subject of a complaint which was filed against the magazine in February 2007 by Rob Wells, a member of the Pride Centre of Edmonton. The complaint consisted of a series of brief quotations, without citation or context, pulled from articles purportedly appearing on Catholic Insight's website. Wells argues that he has “reasonable grounds to believe” that these quotations prove CI is publishing “hate messages” that “are likely to expose a person or persons to hatred or contempt by reason of their sexual orientation.”

Father De Valk denies that the magazine at any point published hate speech. “Our articles were a combination of statements by doctors of the physical defects of the homosexual lifestyle, statements of the Church about the lifestyle, news reports, what had been done by this judge or that judge, and then of course general analysis of the drive by the homosexual group, the activists among them that is. That's what Wells came forward with. And we defended it, saying we have a right to defend sanity, the teaching of the Church and reason.”

Fifteen months after the human rights complaint was filed, CI is still awaiting a ruling from the Canadian Human Rights Commission on whether the matter will proceed beyond the investigation stage. In the meantime the magazine has already racked up \$20,000 in legal fees, with no end in sight. As the complainant, Wells has had all his legal fees covered by the state.

Father De Valk says that not only does he agree with Mark Steyn that, when it comes to human rights commissions, “the process is the punishment,” but he believes the system is “hopeless” and leaves a significant portion of Canadians who hold traditional values “in terror.” This is especially the case, says Father de Valk, since the various adjudicators who have been put in charge of the commissions, “all seem to come from one crowd.”

“They're all people who no longer believe in truth, who believe that hatred is whenever you make me feel uncomfortable. They all have the concept of hatred and comfort mixed up. They no longer believe in the reason of law, the rationale of law, and they certainly don't believe in the Judeo-Christian tradition.” ■

## Commissioner penalized for refusing to officiate at same sex ceremony

The League expressed disappointment June 4 with the decision of the Saskatchewan Human Rights Tribunal to fine a provincial marriage commissioner for declining to perform a “marriage” ceremony for two men.

The pair filed the human rights complaint against the commissioner, Orville Nichols, despite the fact that he referred them to a commissioner who would perform the ceremony and the wedding went ahead.

“We find it unfortunate that Mr. Nichols' timely referral of the request to another commissioner was not found to be sufficient accommodation, especially since the wedding went ahead as planned,” said League President Phil Horgan.

The Saskatchewan Human Rights Tribunal has fined Mr. Nichols \$2,500 after finding he discriminated against the couple when he declined to perform the ceremony. He has performed nearly 2,000 marriages since 1983. Mr. Nichols is considering an appeal of the decision, announced in late May.

Section 3.1 of the Civil Marriage Act (Bill C-38) is instructive as it applies to federal law to safeguard the rights, benefits, and privileges of same-sex marriage “dissenters”, such as Mr. Nicholls (but not apparently to Susan Comstock, story, P. 1), and extends beyond mere protection for “clergy” or “religious officials” as proposed initially in the draft bill that was referred to the Supreme Court of Canada.

The provision states: “For greater certainty, no person or organization shall be deprived of any benefit, or be subject to any obligation or sanction, under any law of the Parliament of Canada solely by reason of their exercise, in respect of marriage between persons of the same sex, of the freedom of conscience and religion guaranteed under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms or the expression of their beliefs in respect of marriage as the union of a man and woman to the exclusion of all others based on that guaranteed freedom.”

As the League noted when Bill C-38 was passed, however, the solemnization of marriages is a provincial responsibility.

Protection of conscientious freedom on this question continues to vary provincially. According to a 2006 article in the Canadian Bar Review, the following provinces have recognized modest accommodation of conscience and religious rights with respect to marriage commissioners, or their equivalents: B.C., Alberta, PEI, and New Brunswick (pending legislative approval).

The following provinces have not accommodated conscientious rights of marriage commissioners or their equivalents, but have not as yet mandated performance of civil ceremonies: Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia. Ontario did pass legislation to recognize "sacred space" of religious communities to be exempted from having to be used for same sex ceremonies.

The following have mandated commissioners to perform ceremonies, without any accommodation of conscience: Newfoundland, Manitoba, Saskatchewan.

Published articles and Canadian census figures suggest low levels of interest in marriage among homosexuals. In Canada, as in the few other jurisdictions that permit homosexual unions, they comprise 0.1 percent of all marriages. ■

## ***Christian organization fined in workplace dispute***

The rights of religious organizations were narrowed in an April ruling of the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal, which has required Christian Horizons, an organization serving the developmentally disabled, to abandon its practice of expecting staff to abide by a code of conduct based on the tenets of evangelical Christianity. The League's analysis, available on our website, discusses the different aspects of this judgment, and what it could mean for other religious organizations.

Responding to a complaint brought by a former employee who claimed she was pressured to quit after entering into a lesbian relationship – a lifestyle clearly prohibited by an agreement she had voluntarily signed at the time of her employment – the tribunal not only ordered payments to the former employee, but also ruled that the organization has no right to put denominationally-based conditions on its staff. The ruling also requires it to phase in procedures and training programs to bring its employment practices into line with the human rights code. Christian Horizons has since dropped the lifestyle and morality clauses of its employment contract, but is appealing the rest of the ruling.

We encourage our members to read this judgment in its entirety. In a strict sense, the part of the judgment dealing with denominational requirements in hiring is not new; the fact that, if challenged, an employer will have to establish that the requirement is a bona fide job requirement was established decades ago. What is new and disturbing, however, is the specter of a government body deciding what is ministry and what isn't, calling its own "experts" to bolster its case, and then ordering training programs to encourage Christian organizations to see things the way the human rights commission sees them. ■

## ***Alberta pastor to appeal ruling***

A former Red Deer pastor will appeal a human rights ruling ordering him to pay \$7,000 in fines and write an apology for an anti-gay letter published in the Red Deer Advocate nearly six years ago. The Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship Commission issued a written order on May 30. It stated that Stephen Boissoin and The Concerned Christian Coalition must pay former Red Deer school teacher Darren Lund \$5,000 in damages.

Another \$2,000 must be paid to Janelle Dodd, one of Lund's witnesses who spoke at an earlier commission hearing.

Boissoin's letter to the editor was published in the June 17, 2002, edition of the Advocate. In it, he compared homosexuals to pedophiles and drug dealers. Boissoin was the executive director of the Christian Coalition at the time. The League does not endorse his comments but believes that

such censorship poses a threat to the expression of religious beliefs in any published forum.

Lund argued that Boissoin's written statements represented a hate crime after a gay teen was attacked in Red Deer shortly after the letter was published. There was no evidence, however, last November, the commission ruled in favour of Lund, saying Boissoin and the coalition had violated human rights law because the letter likely exposed gays to hatred and contempt.

The May 30 decision states that Boissoin and the coalition must stop publishing in all forms of media any "disparaging remarks" about gays and homosexuals. The decision also bans remarks against Lund and his witnesses.

Boissoin has a website that discusses a "gay agenda" in Canadian schools. Further, Boissoin and the coalition are to provide Lund with a written apology.

Calgary lawyer Gerald Chipeur said he has been instructed by Boissoin to appeal the commission's ruling and most recent order. "We will be filing our appeal this month and then it will be heard before a Court of Queen's Bench judge sometime over the next 12 months," Chipeur said. ■

- with a report from The Red Deer Advocate

## ***Whatcott Wins at Supreme Court of Canada***

The Supreme Court of Canada refused May 29 to grant leave to the Saskatchewan Association of Licensed Practical Nurses (SALPN) to appeal the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal decision that overturned the fine imposed against William Whatcott for picketing Planned Parenthood Regina in 2002. As is their practice, the Supreme Court did not give reasons for not granting leave, but did award some costs against SALPN in favor of Whatcott. This marks the end of a long struggle by Whatcott to be reinstated as a Licensed Practical Nurse with the Association.

In the decision of the Discipline Committee of the Saskatchewan Association of Licensed Practical Nurses (SALPN), Whatcott was suspended, because in the opinion of SALPN, he defamed Planned Parenthood of Regina by calling them baby killers and an organization that corrupts the morals of youth. In the Court of Appeal, Whatcott's Lawyer, Tom Schuck, of Weyburn, Saskatchewan, argued that those who object to abortions believe that babies are being killed and SALPN and the Courts are not to take sides on whether one is lying or not when they assert that abortion kills babies. "Whether babies are killed during the abortion process or not killed is a matter of science and opinion and not something that should result in the suspension of a professional", Schuck said.

Whatcott had been suspended for forty-five (45) days from the Association and ordered to pay \$15,000 in costs for picketing in front of Planned Parenthood Regina and calling them "baby killers". Planned Parenthood of America is one the largest abortion providers in North America and is affiliated with International Planned Parenthood, a champion of the abortion rights movement.

In the case, Whatcott raised the constitutionality of SALPN in suspending him, alleging that their action was contrary to Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The Court of Appeal agreed with Whatcott that his Charter Rights were breached and set aside the Decision and ordered SALPN to pay the costs of Whatcott in the Court of Appeal, as well as in the Court of Queen's Bench. ■

## Church media play key role in news as well as evangelization

The importance of participating in public debates, especially through engagement with the media, was emphasized during the Catholic Media Convention, which saw about 500 Catholic media professionals from throughout North America gather in Toronto in May. League President Phil Horgan presented a seminar with Michael Higgins, president of St. Thomas University in Fredericton, about bias in the media and the role of the Church press in telling stories with strong religious and moral overtones. Mr. Horgan presented several case studies, including the decision of Telus to drop its pornography downloads for cellphones and public outcry against the CBC pilot "Altar Boy Gang," to illustrate stories how stories were told in the secular and religious press. Attendees agreed that stories involving the Church or its teachings are usually told more accurately and with more balance in Church media outlets.

However, in another seminar at the convention, representatives of CBC, CTV and the National Post said that the absence of Catholic perspectives in stories about moral debates can usually be traced to the institutional Church's own reluctance to provide media interviews. Peter Kavanagh, a producer at CBC Radio, said that there was a much stronger Catholic presence in the British media during UK parliamentary debates on bioethics than in Canada. He claimed, however, that this was because in Canada "no bioethicist grounded in faith will return a call." The comment though not without a factual basis, ignores the improvements that many dioceses and institutions have made in media relations in recent years, and in any case does not explain the secular media's ability to ignore, year after year, events such as March for Life or Life Chain. Charles Lewis of the National Post said churches should not be afraid to speak out on the issues of the day, but suggested that many are. "The worst that can happen is some people might phone to say they disagree with you."

Neither the "official" Church nor the laity can neglect the large media outlets if we want our perspectives to be heard. Vatican spokesman Jesuit Father Federico Lombardi urged delegates to confront difficult problems and be truthful about them. He cited the example of Pope Benedict in being proactive in addressing the sexual abuse scandal when he visited the United States, and becoming even more credible by meeting with some of the victims. He added that Pope John Paul II had a prophetic vision of what the media could achieve, and was probably the first pope to use it effectively.

Cardinal Marc Ouellet told delegates that after 40 years of secularization in Quebec "the moment has come" for a new way of looking at the Church's historical role in society.

"There is a fear that the influence of the Church will return," he said during a question-and-answer session after he addressed the audience about the Church's call to evangelize and the media's role in that call. Answering a

question about his October testimony to a provincial government-appointed commission looking at accommodating immigrants and their religious practices, the cardinal said he asked to address the commission.

"I think it was an opportunity to reaffirm the Christian roots" of Quebec, he said. He also spoke about the then-upcoming International Eucharistic Conference, taking place June 15 to 21 in Quebec City.

Ethicist Margaret Somerville challenged Catholic media to become "word warriors" and ethics agents to give people "the words they need to protect human dignity."

Words matter because human dignity is under "unprecedented threat," the founding director of McGill University's Centre for Medicine, Ethics and Law told the gathering.

Dr. Somerville advocated the development of a language to convey the "secular sacred," the notion that even without religion "some things are still sacred." She spoke of the need to work against "depersonalization," because it leads to dehumanization. For example, abortion has become normalized because of the depersonalization of the fetus.

It has become easy to make the case for euthanasia and difficult to make the case against it, she said, because of the influence of television and the plight of individuals who seek assisted suicide. It is much harder to show the damage euthanasia will do to collective values and the common good.

Dr. Somerville said she once suggested that if doctors should not be involved in euthanasia, perhaps a specially trained group of lawyers could do it. The response was a horrified: "You can't have lawyers killing people." This shift in the language helped people grasp what was at stake in euthanasia — killing people, not helping people die. ■

## Abortion messages censored

**2008 Media Campaign**

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**9 months.**  
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[www.AbortionInCanada.ca](http://www.AbortionInCanada.ca)



In a ruling in late May, the Advertising Standards Canada (ASC) rejected evidence from Statistics Canada and declared that pro-life billboards which said abortions are allowed in Canada throughout all nine months of pregnancy were "deceptive." Joanne Byfield, president of LifeCanada, the group behind the billboards, said in a press release that the decision was "unbelievable. Our ads simply state the reality in Canada that there is no law restricting abortion at any stage of pregnancy. This ruling says it is 'deceptive' to tell Canadians that."

ASC is a self-regulating body of Canada's advertising industry. It oversees the Canadian Code of Advertising Standards. The Appeal Panel, a group of unnamed members of ASC, upheld an earlier decision by another unnamed Council, supporting the complaints of three anonymous people. Two of them in identically worded complaints said the ads were "neither factual nor true." The third said they were "false, misleading and offensive." The ads, which ran in over 50 communities, show a pregnant woman with the words: "Nine months. The length of time abortion is allowed in Canada. Abortion: Have we gone too far? www.AbortionInCanada.ca." The website includes details on the history, statistics, methods and other relevant information. The educational campaign coincided with the 20th anniversary of the Morgentaler Supreme

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Court decision and intense media coverage. "We wanted to ensure Canadians heard all the perspectives on the results of that decision," said Ms. Byfield.

The Appeal Panel said the billboards were deceptive because they did not mention access issues, which the Panel seemed to assume involved medical reasons after the first trimester. "We have no idea where that notion came from," said Byfield. "We showed them that private abortion clinics advertise abortions up to 20 weeks and some up to 24 weeks without referrals. But in a closed hearing, who knows what 'evidence' they consider?"

"With this decision, ASC is playing a censorship role, silencing information some people may not want to hear," said Byfield. "Our ads are true and quite frankly, most of this country's print and broadcast media, all of whom are members of ASC, were talking about the lack of legal restrictions on abortion during the same period our ads were running. Some of them are now campaigning against restrictions on free speech. We hope they see this decision for what it is: an attempt to silence the pro-life voice from public discussion."

The League recognizes that all media are free to accept or reject paid advertising according to their own standards. However, the grounds cited in this instance – that the factual content is deceptive – do not stand up to reasonable scrutiny. Abortion is in fact legal in Canada at any stage of pregnancy.

Just before World Youth Day in 2002, we tried to get the Advertising Standards Council to recommend the removal of a billboard from the dissident group "Catholics for a Free Choice" that claimed Church policy was causing deaths from AIDS. At that time, the council refused our complaint, saying that advocacy advertisements were in the nature of fundamental ethical and religious principles, which "unlike commercial products and services, the Canadian Code of Advertising Standards were never intended to address."

The Life Canada billboards are less controversial than the CFFC ones. The League hopes the organization appeals the ruling. ■

### South Park update

As reported in our last issue, the Comedy Network repeated an episode of the US series South Park that featured particularly vile anti-Catholic content. Due to the highly satirical nature of the show, it's quite possible similar content will occur in future episodes. The network has

acknowledged that the comedy is controversial, and has assured us it will not be shown prior to 9 pm. ■

### Campus pro-life groups stifled

The League criticized resolutions of the York University Federation of Students (YFS) aimed at denying pro-life groups any official status on campus. The move, announced May 28, follows its cancellation last spring of a campus debate on abortion.

This is a clear-cut attempt to stifle free speech on campus, and particularly troubling since universities are places where open debate and inquiry are expected to be particularly encouraged. While it's true that the university administration criticized the YFS motion and spoken in favour of freedom of speech, this may be a situation where more than talk will be required. Students, prospective students and their families make school decisions on a number of factors, and freedom of speech and inquiry ranks high.

According to a report in The National Post, the school's administration condemned the decision as contrary to its academic mission, and said it would try to compensate by providing its own venues and resources to legitimate debates. Robert J. Tiffin, York's vice-president of students, said he was "disappointed" the policy was being enacted when virtually all of the student body has left campus for the summer.

Similar controversies unfolded across Canada over the past year, with pro-life groups at Capilano College, the University of British Columbia-Okanagan, Lakehead University and Carleton University stripped of official club status and funding, at least once by the action of a single member of student council. Some clubs have regained status, while others appealed their cases to human rights commissions. Capilano College's group was granted the right to be accepted as a campus club after appealing to the BC Human Rights Tribunal.

In the League's view, these incidents go beyond a curious understanding of free speech by the students involved and suggest they may even fear the merit of what the pro-life groups have to say. So perhaps the fact that human life is present from the moment of conception is getting through after all. ■

### CCRL IN THE NEWS...

Has been moved to our website for this edition. Follow the links under Action Items/ Media Monitoring Centre.



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Despite the time constraints of his medical practice and working for CFFC, Dr. Simone often speaks in local schools to spread the message that hunger can be conquered, and that as little as 10 cents a day can feed a child. Classes are invited to visit the warehouse and many do so.

Dr. Simone believes there is plenty of food to go around if we have our priorities straight. "I don't think the problem is a shortage of food. I think the problem is greed on the part of adults; that's why we try to reach schoolchildren with our message." Donations for Canadian Food for Children can be sent to 40 King Georges Road, Toronto, Ont. M8X 1L3.

Dr. Simone received the award with humility and responded in song, reminding us that April showers lead to May flowers, and that from the wonders of nature to a baby's first cry, we all have reason to believe in a great and wonderful God.

The Archbishop Adam Exner award was created in 2004 to honour Archbishop Exner on the occasion of his retirement from the Archdiocese of Vancouver. Previous recipients include Regina businessman Frederick W. Hill, OC, for services to philanthropy; Fraser Field of Catholic Educators Resource Centre for services to education; and Jim Hughes, president of Campaign Life Coalition, for services to the pro-life movement.

Guest speaker at the dinner was Father Tom Lynch, professor of theology at St. Augustine's seminary, and pastor of St. Joseph's parish in Douro, Ontario. Father Lynch recently became president of Priests for Life Canada.

His talk was a challenge to all laity to remain true witnesses to the faith in the public square, starting with an active prayer life and finding quiet time with God. He stressed the opportunities that new media, including Facebook, may play in the new evangelism. He was prepared to be critical of the formation of Catholics over the past several generations, and the demands of a structure that places great stress on a reduced number of priests. While he mentioned a number of challenges in Church and society, Father Lynch also cited a great opportunity for lay groups, family foundations and other charitable or advocacy groups to use our society's considerable wealth for positive purposes, including evangelization and philanthropy. We will make the text available through our website as soon as possible. ■

**Please visit our website at:**

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added that the 130,000 members of PSAC, and indeed all unions, should take a greater interest in the activities of their union executives, including elections, and seek representatives that have a more balanced approach to contentious moral issues. A more recent example of such advocacy has been the union's opposition to Bill C-484, proposing to amend the Criminal Code by acknowledging unborn victims of violence.

At least one group of PSAC employees has challenged the union on its advocacy against Bill C-484, which would make it a separate crime to kill or injure a fetus in the course of a crime against his or her mother. The union responded with a defense of abortion rights, and an attack on C-484 lifted from the massive misinformation campaign against the bill orchestrated by pro-abortion groups, yet also affirmed its support for "individual personal, moral and religious convictions or beliefs." (In fact, Bill C-484 specifically excludes abortion.) ■

### **Quebec national assembly crucifix stays**

The Taylor-Bouchard report on reasonable accommodation, released May 22, contains some good insights about Quebec's evolution as a minority culture within North America, as well as useful recommendations about how cultural and religious minorities can be – and usually are – incorporated into the cultural fabric. Many League members contributed to the hearing process, including Director Jean Morse-Chevrier in her capacity as president of the Quebec Catholic Parents' Association. The report notes that people can most often work out any conflicts among themselves, without going the route of human rights commissions, courts and other official channels that often prolong the problem or create even more of them. Similarly, it found that many of the problems that led to the creation of the Committee on Reasonable Accommodation were exaggerated by the media, sometimes to the point of distortion.

One specific recommendation aimed at ensuring the state's "religious neutrality" -- the removal to a museum of the crucifix hanging in the Quebec legislature -- was immediately shot down. Within minutes of the report being published, Mr. Charest introduced a motion in the National Assembly supporting the crucifix as a sign of "our religious heritage." It passed unanimously.

This affirmation of Quebec's Catholic roots comes barely a year and a half after the former leader of the opposition, Andre Boisclair, called for the removal of that same crucifix. The recommendation itself is based on what the commission describes favourably as "open secularism," a concept more colloquially described as "freedom from religion" -- where organized religion and its symbols are absent from public life -- rather than the fundamental freedom of religion enshrined in liberal democracies. In an environment of true religious freedom, the state does not espouse any one denomination, but rather fosters an environment where all can practice their faith openly. This openness is most likely to be fostered by people with a strong sense of their own faith and their own religious tradition. ■

- See the articles section of our website for more analysis