



# Catholic Civil Rights League

[www.ccrl.ca](http://www.ccrl.ca)

*Monthly highlights*

Volume 2, No. 2, February 25, 2011

## Carleton campus pro-life club sues university

Although many university pro-life clubs operate as freely as other campus groups, problems continue at several campuses across Canada.

At Carleton University, probably the first school where students were actually handcuffed while being arrested for trespassing last October, Carleton Lifeline is now suing the university and its administration for \$225,000 for discrimination. The trespassing charges occurred when a group set up its Genocide Awareness Program (GAP) display in a busy, public area of the campus after being told to use a less-travelled area indoors. The GAP display includes graphic posters of late term abortions and incidents of mass genocide from around the world, and claims there are parallels between abortion and the Holocaust.

"Carleton University's decision to have Carleton Lifeline arrested, charged with trespassing and fined was excessive, unjustified and constituted an attempt to bully, intimidate and censor them," Lifeline's statement of claim says. The university has several weeks to respond.

The claim, filed by Lifeline members Ruth Lobo and John McLeod, also says being arrested and detained last fall infringed on their rights under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

They are seeking \$100,000 in general damages for wrongful arrest and pain and suffering, \$100,000 for punitive damages and \$25,000 for the Charter violations. The Ottawa university's student association recently upheld its decision to withhold funding from the group and revoke its club status at a constitutional board hearing.

Over the past several years, universities including Calgary, Lakehead, Memorial, Victoria and Guelph have all taken similar steps to cut off pro-life groups, though in some cases the decision was later rescinded. The

decisions arise from a policy statement by the Canadian Students Federation, which encourages all member organizations to limit club funding to groups that do not oppose abortion.

The University of Calgary charged several students with trespassing in February 2009 and threatened them with expulsion after they refused to turn GAP posters away from passersby.

But effectively banning these groups is stifling political debate in a way that would ultimately be defeated in court, legal experts say.

"I think a freedom-of-expression issue would be raised," Nathalie Des Rosiers, general counsel for the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, told Canadian Press in an article Feb. 7. "In my view, probably denying the right to a pro-life group to express themselves would not be acceptable."

The League has always taken that view that student pro-life activism, including the GAP display, is a legitimate exercise of freedom of speech. We have provided assistance to a number of the student groups who have faced on-campus censorship.

### *National pro-life events of interest:*

**40 Days for Life:** See [40daysforlife.com](http://40daysforlife.com) for locations.

**March for Life** (League is among the sponsors). Follow links from [campaignlifecoalition.com/](http://campaignlifecoalition.com/) for local travel arrangements.

**To receive our news updates electronically,  
please send your e-mail address to:  
[ccrl@ccrl.ca](mailto:ccrl@ccrl.ca)**

## Quebec town council told to cut prayer

QUEBEC CITY, QC, February 16, 2011 - The crucifix is staying in Quebec's legislature despite an order by the province's human rights tribunal that the city of Saguenay end the practice of reciting a Christian prayer at the start of council meetings. (Quebec town council told to cut out prayer time, CCRL, January 5, 2008.) In ruling that the council prayer infringed on the freedom of conscience of Alain Simoneau, the local resident who made the complaint against the city and its mayor, Jean Tremblay, Quebec's human rights tribunal ordered the municipality to remove all religious icons from City Hall. The decision also requires Mayor Tremblay and the city to pay Mr. Simoneau \$30,000 in moral and punitive damages. The mayor and council have said they will appeal the decision.

## Freedom of Christian universities challenged

TORONTO, February 11, 2011 (CCRL) - The Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) has once again targeted Christian universities for supposedly restricting academic freedom by requiring staff to sign a faith statement (National Post editorial, Feb. 11, 2011). As we noted when this campaign was first reported a year ago, the attempt to marginalize religion in higher education is rather ironic in view of the role faith communities played in establishing our university system.

Because none of the targeted universities has ever been the subject of a complaint about their faith requirements, and given that their faith commitment was already well-known, it's difficult to infer any motive other than anti-religious bias in this campaign. If you are faculty member at any Canadian university, visit [statementoncaut.blogspot.com](http://statementoncaut.blogspot.com) to endorse a petition asking CAUT to end the harassment.

## Court challenge to Quebec's ECR course

We're pleased to report that Faith and Freedom Alliance (FFA) has joined a group seeking to intervene in the Supreme Court challenge involving Quebec's Ethics and Religious Culture course. The group, which now includes FFA, the League, the Quebec Association of Catholic Parents and Coptic Orthodox

Community Association of Montreal, will emphasize support for parental rights in the education of their children, and the constitutional basis for the accommodation of religious belief.

## Media Watch

### League protests Bell decision to drop EWTN

TORONTO, February 16, 2011 - The League has written to Bell Express Vu customer service and to Bell Canada's executive team asking them to reconsider the decision to discontinue Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN) at the end of February. We pointed out that many subscribers find that EWTN has an international dimension that is complementary to Canada's Salt and Light Television, to which they also subscribe. The loss will be felt particularly by those in condo developments who pay for their telecom services through their monthly fee and therefore do not have a choice of satellite provider. Those who can may simply switch to another provider.

Through the support of our late director Fred Hill, a Regina philanthropist and business leader, the League was instrumental in getting EWTN available to Canadian satellite services in the early 2000's. We hope that the service will be retained by Express Vu, or at least offered through its upcoming fibre optics service. In the meantime, EWTN continues to be available on many Canadian networks, which can be located through its channel finder at [ewtn.com](http://ewtn.com).

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*Let the League know:* Articles, cartoons and advertising that you believe have anti-Catholic content should be sent to [cctl@cctl.ca](mailto:cctl@cctl.ca) to help us respond in a timely way.

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