



# Catholic Civil Rights League

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## League supports SCC appeal in Quebec schools case

The Catholic Civil Rights League is pleased to learn that the Supreme Court of Canada Oct. 21 allowed the appeal of families from Drummondville, Quebec seeking an exemption from the province's ethics and religious culture (ERC) course.

"This case is about the principle of parental authority in the religious education of their children," said League President Phil Horgan. "The appeal is a significant opportunity to affirm these rights in the public forum, and encourage parental rights in the implementation of moral and religious instruction in Quebec's public schools."

The League supports Quebec's Catholic parents, and those of other faiths, in their insistence that parents are the first educators of their children, and have the right to choose their religious education. The League is among the educational and religious organizations that supported the application for appeal, in recognition of the rights of parents to direct their children's religious education.

The League hopes to participate in an intervention in the appeal with the support of its members.

The Quebec Court of Appeal refused Feb. 24 to hear an appeal of the lower court's decision, claiming that the family's request was no longer meaningful since it had no children in the system. Since then, the court ruled on an application from Loyola High School, a private school that had applied to cover the ERC content from a Catholic perspective. The decision – currently under appeal by the province – exempted the school from the ERC course.

"It is quite simply unacceptable that most families are denied a right, allowed in theory by the Law on Public Education (LIP), but denied to them in practice," said Jean-Morse-Chevrier, League director and President of the Association of Catholic Parents of Quebec (APCQ).

"According to the APCQ, the ministry has to amend the instructions it sends to school boards so that public schools grant the same right of exemption from the ERC course as the court has just recognized for private schools."

The new course was introduced in September, 2009 to replace older courses in Catholic or Protestant religion, or non-religious ethics courses. More than 70 per cent of families had been choosing courses with religious content. Requests for exemption from the new course have been refused.

### **Bill C-510 to be debated**

The first hour of debate on Bill C-510, Roxanne's Law, which would make it a criminal offence to coerce a woman into having an abortion against her will, is to take place Monday, Nov. 1. Second hour of debate will be in early December, with Second Reading vote likely to take place on Dec. 8. If it passes the vote at Second Reading, it will go to the Justice Committee for study. This private member's bill is only a small step in the effort to restore respect for life in the law, but the League supports it as a move in the right direction. Please express your support to your MP if you agree.

## Media Watch & League News

### Bias and prejudice discussed at AGM

Anti-religious bias exists in the media because it exists in society and therefore exists in newsrooms, National Post reporter and editor Charles Lewis told the League's AGM in Toronto.

"The Catholic Church is singled out more as a target for anti-religious bias because it is the biggest Christian denomination, has an identifiable hierarchy with no question of "who's in charge", and stands for everything that liberal journalists don't believe in," said Mr. Lewis, who serves as the Post's religion reporter and editor of the blog Holy Post.

The Vatican's questionable media relations skills - highlighted best recently by the Vatican press office including the ordination of women and the sex abuse scandal in a single document, creating the impression that the Church regards them as equally grave - are also a factor, he added.

"Whatever their own beliefs, good editors understand that religion is interesting to their readers even if they themselves are not friendly to the church." Noting that The Post is among the very few dailies that still has a religion reporter, he said that this dedicated focus may help account for why the Christian Horizons case and the censorship of pro-life student exhibits got much more extensive coverage there than elsewhere. While religion can be difficult to cover, those media that fail to do so are omitting a subject that plays a role in many of their readers' lives and in society.

Mr. Lewis added that some of the problems that plague the reporting of religion also affect other subjects, given that news by definition is about the unusual or the sensational. "You could look at the coverage of the sex abuse scandal, with the "new" revelations day in and day out, and say yes, they went too far, but that's what newspapers do.

"There are no conspiracies. Inaccuracies and bias in reporting relate more to the need to meet deadlines quickly, with fewer editorial resources than we once had, and ignorance of religious matters. In general this is an age of secularism and secularism is winning. There is also huge religious ignorance, as illus-

trated by the recent Pew Survey, which found half of Catholics don't know the doctrine of the true presence, and as many Protestants could not identify Martin Luther."

In the business portion of the meeting, voting members of the League approved its board of directors for 2010-11, welcoming Luke Campbell of Alberta and thanking John Sidle, who is stepping down after two terms as treasurer. (See our web page for a complete list of directors.)

They also approved the 2009 financial statements and annual report. *Our annual report is available to all members upon request (e-mail [ccrl@ccrl.ca](mailto:ccrl@ccrl.ca) or call 416-466-8244).*

### Star article challenged

The League protested to the Toronto Star for a sneering column Oct. 13 about sainthood on the eve of the canonization of St. Andre. While possibly just a failed attempt at humour or satire, the column conveyed a message that most saints were as delusional as those who now believe in them. In response, the League said that most saints' stories are really about people who stood firm in their convictions against serious obstacles, and faced the consequences that were typical of their time. That is why many believers continue to regard saints as part of their faith life, and probably find more substance in them than they do in "the wonders of technology" or today's media.

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

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