



# Catholic Civil Rights League

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

*Monthly highlights*      Volume 3, No. 4, April 30, 2012

## Concerns grow about anti-bullying proposals

The League will present its position about Ontario's Bills 13 and 14 at Queens Park May 15, appearing before the Select Committee on Social Policy. We will argue that anti-bullying policies in schools need to be based on respect for the equality and dignity of all members of the school community. Bill 13, with its emphasis on issues of gender and sexual orientation, and its use of "homophobia" and "homophobic" throughout the text, does not focus sufficiently on the needs of all students. Its insistence that student-led Gay-Straight Alliances be made available in all schools upon student request would make it impossible for Catholic schools to fulfill their constitutionally-guaranteed responsibility to uphold the Catholic faith.

The hearings will include a variety of interested groups. The committee is expected to report back to the legislature before the final vote, currently scheduled for May 30. We will provide a news update about this matter through our regular e-news service.

### **Pro-life controversy draws attention to Catholic school funding**

Many media commentators are using current controversies about pro-life and GSAs in Ontario to attack the funding of Catholic schools. The League recently responded to two such articles, one in the National Post and one in the Toronto Star. A portion of the Post letter (April 27) follows. "Chris Selley is quite accurate in his almost satirical assessment of the politically correct view

of abortion in Canada: it's pro-choice, no debate allowed. What is less clear is why he would find it "genuinely astonishing" that Catholic schools don't follow that particular view, or that politicians don't challenge them on it. The denominational rights of Ontario's Catholic schools, including the teaching of the faith, are recognized by both the constitution and the human rights code. Pro-life activism would not be expected in a public school that is officially neutral on religious matters, but people don't send their children to Catholic schools expecting religious neutrality."

We encourage all our members to contribute letters to the editor on issues of interest to the League.

### **Prostitution ruling to be appealed**

The Catholic Civil Rights League is pleased to learn that the federal government is seeking leave to appeal the ruling from the Ontario Court of Appeal that struck down several anti-prostitution laws. The League, an [intervenor in the case](#), urged Justice Minister Rob Nicholson to appeal the ruling just after it was announced. We also suggested that introducing a new prostitution law, and the use of the notwithstanding clause, may both be needed.

"The League intervened in this case in an effort to have a voice in court in support of the moral values shared by the majority of Canadians," said Joanne McGarry, League executive director. "With our partners REAL Women of Canada and Christian Legal Fellowship, we were the only intervenors completely in support of retaining all the provisions in

the Criminal Code. Our position was and remains that while the law is not perfect, any liberalization of it would not improve prostitutes' safety, and would make it easier to lure and exploit vulnerable girls and women."

While upholding the Code provision that makes it illegal to publicly solicit or communicate with clients in public, the Ontario Court of Appeal decision upheld the 2010 Ontario superior court ruling that provisions against living off the avails and keeping a common bawdy house should be legalized because they place unconstitutional restrictions on prostitutes' ability to take safety measures such as hiring security to protect themselves.

The League supported the government's view that the laws were not causing the danger to prostitutes, rather that the danger is inherent in the work itself.

### **Debate held on Motion 312**

MP Stephen Woodworth's motion to revisit an old law that defines human personhood as commencing only at live birth received its first hour of debate April 26. The debate was not well-attended and most who spoke opposed the motion. It will come up for debate and voting either late in June or in the Fall. We urge you to support this motion through communication with MPs and by participating in online polls. Polls about issues of interest to the League are often included on our Facebook page as well as in our e-news service.

### **Sex-selection abortions in Canada**

The League commented April 16 on new reports that the selective abortion of females is happening in Canada among ethnic groups where boys are preferred.

An editorial in the Journal of the Canadian Medical Association in February recommended withholding the gender of the unborn child from parents in an effort to curtail the practice; a new study reported in April by the same journal finds evidence that Indian-born mothers living in Canada are more likely to have male children at their second or later births, than what is average for all

births. For example, for third births, the male to female ratio in the study group was 1.36 (136 boys for every 100 girls), compared to the 1.05 normally found for all births.

"The willingness to use abortion in order to exercise a cultural preference for boys should not be surprising in Canada, where there are no legal limitations on abortion and multiculturalism is respected," said Joanne McGarry, League executive director. "The possibilities for addressing sex selection by restricting the use of ultrasound are really rather limited – and for some, probably hard to justify – when no reason for any abortion needs to be given under the law."

While extreme, sex selection abortions really underline the need for education and a new law, which together are the only things that could really help restore respect for all life.

The League again financially supported the annual March for Life May 10 in Ottawa, which many of our members attended.

### **Plan to attend our annual dinner**

The Catholic Civil Rights League is pleased to announce that its annual gala dinner will take place June 7 at Spirale's Banquet and Conference Centre in Toronto. The evening will include a keynote address by Professor Robert Ventresca, chair of the Department of History at Kings University College, London, Ontario, and the presentation of the 2012 Archbishop Adam Exner Award for Catholic Excellence in Public Life. Professor Ventresca will discuss popular representations and perceptions of the Church's role during the Holocaust and the challenges and opportunities faced in reconciling popular memory with historical knowledge. To request tickets, please e-mail [cctl@cctl.ca](mailto:cctl@cctl.ca) or call Joanne at 416-466-8244.

*Our mailing address: Catholic Civil Rights League, 500-120 Eglinton Ave. East, Toronto, Ont. M4P 1E2.*

*Website: [www.cctl.ca](http://www.cctl.ca)*