



Catholic Civil Rights League

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League applies to intervene in Loyola appeal

TORONTO, ON November 29, 2013 – The League has filed an application to intervene in the Supreme Court of Canada (SCC) appeal of Montreal’s Loyola High School, which is seeking to modify Quebec’s Ethics and Religious Culture (ECR) course to teach it from a Catholic standpoint.

The League, in a joint application with the Association of Catholic Parents of Quebec, Faith and Freedom Alliance and The Association of Coptic Christians of Montreal, emphasized the religious freedom aspects of the case, and the role of the state in encouraging religious freedom, in its application. “If granted leave to intervene in this appeal, the Moving Parties intend to focus their submissions, on some or all, of the issues concerning corporate or collective freedom of religion, multiculturalism and, parental rights under the Charter, as well as parental rights under Québec civil law,” the memorandum of argument states.

The League was an intervener at the SCC in the case of [SL and DJ vs. Commission scolaire des Chênes](#), in which parents had sought unsuccessfully to exempt their children from the ECR course.

Loyola High School had asked to cover the ECR course material in a world religions’ course based on its Catholic perspective, which it had already been offering for a number of years, a request which was upheld by the Quebec Superior Court but appealed by the province. The Court of Appeal decision, issued December 4, 2012, declared that because Loyola’s course is Catholic in orientation, it could not be considered equivalent to the ECR program, because the ECR course was specifically designed to be religiously “neutral.”

Motion on equality rights welcome

OTTAWA, ON November 22, 2013 – The Catholic Civil Rights League today commended the initiative of MP

Stephen Woodworth in bringing forth a motion calling on the House of Commons to affirm that every Canadian law must be interpreted in a manner which recognizes the equal worth and dignity of everyone who is in fact a human being.

“We support the goal of legal recognition of unborn children as human beings, and we applaud the ongoing efforts and courage of pro-life MPs to extend basic civil rights to these most vulnerable of human beings,” said League Executive Director Joanne McGarry.

Citing the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights principle that “recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world...” Mr. Woodworth said: “Laws like subsection 223(1), which falsely condemn as non-human those we know to be human, are savage and inhumane, a throwback to a more barbarous age. (The law states that a child is a human being for legal purposes after it has completely exited the mother’s body in a living state.)

“No ideology, no political interest and no personal desire justifies such a law,” he said. Referring to growing up in the 1960’s, labelled the “Age of Aquarius,” Woodworth pointed out that it was “unimaginable” then that Parliament in the twenty-first century would shelter such a law.

Under Parliamentary rules Woodworth cannot, without consent, bring this Motion to a vote but he said he was proposing it to “draw a line in the sand.”

In the last parliamentary session, Mr. Woodworth proposed Motion 312, which called for a parliamentary committee study calling on scientific and medical evidence to review Canada’s law on when a child becomes a human being. It was defeated 203 to 91 in September

2012. Mr. Woodworth was guest speaker at the League's 2013 annual dinner.

Palliative care initiative launched

OTTAWA, ON November 6, 2013 – The Catholic Civil Rights League is encouraged to note that two NDP MPs have launched initiatives to address the gaps in access to good palliative care, including long-term and home care.

On Oct. 31, NDP Health Critic Libby Davies introduced private member's Bill C-545: "An act respecting the provision of continuing care to Canadians," and NDP Ethics Critic Charlie Angus introduced a private member's motion to establish a national palliative care strategy. The motion was based on the recommendation for a national strategy from the all-party Parliamentary Committee on Palliative and Compassionate Care, to which the League made a submission in 2010.

"We are pleased to see these initiatives brought forward," said CCRL Executive Director Joanne McGarry. "As many as 70 per cent of Canadians do not have good access to palliative care. Some of the support we see for euthanasia is based on peoples' concern that they may not be able to access good end-of-life care when they need it."

Ms. Davies told the House of Commons when she introduced her bill: "Palliative care and continuing care are critical issues to Canadians. There is a strong national consensus from academics, health professionals and the public that we are sadly lacking in the pan-Canadian plan for continuing care, including home care, long-term care, respite care and palliative care." Her bill would establish "pan-Canadian standards for best practices in continuing care, caregiver support, training, infrastructure and affordability."

While supporting the concept behind these private members' motions, the League will follow debate closely to ensure that the definition of palliative care does not stretch to include "medical aid in dying", as has happened in Quebec with Bill 52.

Media Watch

CBC documentary questioned

We have written to the CBC ombudsman and to the host of CBC television's ongoing news documentary series *The Last Right*, which explores euthanasia and assisted suicide, to express concerns about the strong one-sidedness of the first two episodes. "(We are concerned)

with the relative lack of coverage of the other side of the issue; the shows airing on October 28 and November 4 totalled almost 40 minutes, and yet I counted no more than three minutes of commentary that was opposed to legalizing assisted suicide, and perhaps 10 minutes that could be considered neutral. This would not be an issue for me if the program had been presented as a docu-drama or other standalone programming. However, the positioning of a program within a national newscast creates an expectation that all sides of an issue will be given at least roughly equal time," the League said in a letter from Executive Director Joanne McGarry. A third episode, broadcast after the letter was written, was even more one-sided than the first two. It remains to be seen if future episodes will cover the work of the many individuals and advocacy groups who oppose assisted suicide and euthanasia and articulate thoughtful and well-reasoned grounds for their position. We know of several who have been interviewed for the program but as of this writing none have been featured.

Let the League know: If you see articles, advertising, notices of TV programs or other media content that you believe have serious anti-Catholic content, please contact us at ccrl@ccrl.ca to help us evaluate and respond in a timely way.

League News

Tom Langan book released

The Catholic Civil Rights League memorial tribute "*An Anthology of Witness*," a collection of writings by the late Tom Langan, League co-founder and long-time president, has been released and can be delivered in time for Christmas within Canada if ordered before December 14. The suggested donation is \$10 per copy. All donors to our Fall Development appeal are receiving a copy as a thank-you gift.

The writings were selected from columns, speeches and articles Professor Langan wrote for the League, primarily between 1995 and 2007. They cover a wide range of topics, including issues such as anti-Catholic defamation, Catholic school rights, re-definition of marriage and the ethics of stem cell research. There are also reflections on the re-organization of the League as a national advocacy organization.

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