



Catholic Civil Rights League

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Monthly highlights Volume 4, No. 10, October 31, 2013

League welcomes BC decision in assisted suicide case

VANCOUVER, BC October 11, 2013 – The Catholic Civil Rights League is pleased with the October 10 decision of the B.C. Court of Appeal (BCCA) in the assisted suicide and euthanasia case Carter vs. Canada. The court ruled that only Parliament is constitutionally empowered to consider changes to Canada’s law prohibiting assisted suicide and euthanasia, overturning a 2012 trial judge’s ruling which had carved out exceptions to the existing Criminal Code suicide provision.

“The 2012 decision allowing exceptions to the law was particularly troubling, given its activist reasoning and its express repudiation of a House of Commons vote from the year before the argument in court. The Court of Appeal has recognized the importance of broad consultation, and the risks to disabled, terminally ill and other vulnerable patients,” said League President Philip Horgan. “By upholding the right to life and recognizing Parliament’s final authority as lawmaker, this decision helps protect the rights of patients, as well as the religious and conscientious rights of doctors and other health care providers who would be affected by any change to our laws against euthanasia and assisted suicide.”

In the majority opinion, the court wrote “The societal consequences of permitting physician-assisted suicide in Canada – and indeed enshrining it as a constitutional right – are a matter of serious concern to many Canadians.”

The plaintiffs in the case have announced their intention to seek leave to appeal the decision to the Supreme Court of Canada. Assisted suicide would be permitted under certain circumstances in a law the Quebec government has introduced in the current legislative session.

When Parliament last voted on this issue (on Bill C-384, in April, 2010), the proposal for liberalization was defeated by a vote of 228 to 59 due to concerns about the

potential for abuse of seniors and people with disabilities, the lack of an effective national suicide prevention strategy, and the lack of access to good palliative care in Canada. The League is an institutional member of the Euthanasia Prevention Coalition, which intervened in the Carter case and appeal. The League also submitted a brief to the legislative committee that studied Bill C-384. We remain active in the deliberations currently under way in Quebec.

Tom Langan book released

TORONTO, October 29, 2013 – The Catholic Civil Rights League is pleased to announce that “An Anthology of Witness,” a collection of writings by the late Tom Langan, League co-founder and long-time president, has been released.

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.

The League was founded in Toronto in 1985 by a small group of clergy and academics, including Professor Langan, who later served as president until 2004. It was substantially re-organized in the mid-90s to include directors and members from across Canada.

“As I read these articles, I realized how much the Catholic Civil Rights League still follows the direction and philosophy that Tom set during his many years of leadership,” said League Executive Director Joanne McGarry. “His emphasis on defending the civil rights of Catholics with insistence but also with civility remains our guiding principle.”

All donors to the League's Fall Development drive will receive a copy of the booklet. It can also be ordered separately, for a suggested donation of \$10 per copy, by contacting the League by e-mail at ccrl@ccrl.ca or by surface mail at 1000 – 120 Eglinton Ave. East, Toronto ON M4P 1E2.

Saskatoon seeks prayer compromise

SASKATOON, SK October 2, 2013 – The City of Saskatoon is seeking a compromise in its ongoing response to a human rights complaint against a prayer being said at a volunteer appreciation event last year. The city's solicitor recently presented three possible policy changes in response to the complaint: forego prayer at all civic functions; have a moment of silence instead; or create a general and inclusive statement for the purpose that will incorporate spirituality but not name a particular deity. Council voted for the third option.

"While the League has traditionally favoured civic opening exercises that rotate among various faith groups in a community, including options such as a moment of silence to include those of no established belief, the option of one verse that includes all is an interesting one that should be explored," said League Executive Director Joanne McGarry. "The alternative of banning all prayer from the public events merely helps exclude religion from the public square, which denies the role that faith continues to play in the lives of the majority of people. We need to find ways to reflect our growing religious diversity as a society and this option may prove to be one of them."

The prayer policy in Saskatoon is one of a number of controversies that have arisen around the matter. Last December, the city briefly drew national attention for refusing to remove "Merry Christmas" greetings from city buses, a decision that spurred Ashu Solo, who filed the original complaint about the prayer at a volunteer breakfast, to file another one about the buses. The Mayor's Prayer Breakfast — a long-running tradition in Saskatoon — has also been renamed the Prayer Breakfast.

Municipalities including Bancroft and Peterborough in Ontario have successfully fought challenges to ban councillors from saying a prayer before council meetings. In May, the Quebec Human Rights Commission allowed Saguenay Mayor Jean Tremblay to say a 20 second prayer before council meetings, after he lost a previous challenge before the provincial human rights tribunal.

Also in May, the Ontario town of Penetanguishene was ordered by the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario to stop saying a Christian prayer before council meetings.

Media Watch

Halloween costumes questioned

We have written to the retailer Spirit Halloween, which has numerous stores as well as online service across Canada as well as the U.S., to protest its inclusion of sexually-oriented costumes based on Catholic religious attire. "By including overtly sexual components, these costumes are insulting to Catholics and many other religious believers. It also appears that there are no similar costumes available directed at other religions, reinforcing the impression that an anti-Catholic mentality is driving this selection." We urged them to reconsider the sale of such products.

CRTC launches television feedback page

The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) has launched a website where members of the public can provide feedback about their use of television, how it is delivered and regulated, and what their preferences are now and for the future. For more information and to participate, visit the website: <http://www.crtc.gc.ca/eng/talktv-parlonstele.htm>.

Twitter updates: To receive Tweets from the League, please follow [@DrChristianElia](https://twitter.com/DrChristianElia)

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Like us on Facebook. Visit our page often for polls, photographs and articles of interest that aren't included on our main web page.

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.

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