

ERC course in Québec

"David against Goliath" at the Supreme Court

MONTREAL, October 21, 2010 - The Supreme Court of Canada has granted leave to appeal in the case of the Drummondville couple who want to opt out of the province's mandatory Ethics and Religious Culture course that has been introduced into all Québec schools, from grade one to the end of high school.

The Coalition for Freedom in Education welcomes this favourable decision as it will allow a crucial debate to take place: who ultimately is responsible for the moral and religious education of our children, parents or the government?

This is why the Coalition supports these determined parents who have the courage to fight for their convictions. The president of the Coalition for Freedom in Education, Sylvain Lamontagne, stated that "Imposing this curriculum on all children is a serious onslaught on parental rights and freedom of conscience; some sociologists even qualify this as indoctrination".

"We are hopeful that the Supreme Court will recognise the parental right to choose the moral and religious education of their children as stated in the Québec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms" added Richard Décarie, the Coalition's spokesperson. Public schools have officially refused to grant any exemption, backed by their school boards, which, by law, have the right to grant such exemptions.

This loss of parents' fundamental rights as the first educators of their children is unique in Canada but could have a dangerous impact if other provinces were to follow this example. The loss of the fundamental right for parents to choose the moral and religious education of their children, if it goes unchallenged, may set a precedent and encourage other provinces in Canada to follow Québec's lead.

The Coalition stresses that imposing this single Ethics and Religious Culture curriculum on all students from elementary to high school - on private denominational schools as well as on public schools -, without any possibility of exemption, exceeds the legitimate powers of governments and violates the liberty of conscience and religion enshrined in the Canadian Charter of Rights (section 2a).

Quebeckers are also deeply committed to the right to choose the moral and religious education for their children that suits them, as several surveys have indicated. "It is very regrettable that the stubbornness of the Charest government who refuses consistently to grant any exemption to parents or teachers, although this right is embedded in the law, forces a family from Drummondville to bring the case all the way to the Supreme Court; we would have preferred that this issue be settled earlier in a manner that is respectful of parental rights", said Sylvain Lamontagne.

The Coalition for Freedom in Education supports parents requesting an exemption from Québec school boards; details are available on their website at www.Coalition-CLE.org.

Donations to the Coalition are welcomed to help families obtain justice.

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