

The eReview provides analysis on public policy relating to Canadian families and marriage.



## **Family-friendly policy in 2012**

By Dave Quist, Executive Director, Institute of Marriage and Family Canada

How was your Christmas? Expectations too low? Too high? Did you remember the reason for the season?

May 2, 2011 brought in the first majority government since 2004. In those interim years, many felt that a minority government was in order because the governing party had too much power. However, the result of consecutive minorities was that each party maintained one, if not both feet, on an election footing—resulting in some wearying exchanges in the House of Commons.

I, for one, am glad to have a majority government for the next four years. In speaking with Members of Parliament and reading the press, but most importantly in hearing from Canadians, there is an attitude of “let’s get some things done.” While there will be debate, it is time to delve into important issues, rather than watching for the next federal election.

What are some of the family-related issues to watch in 2012?

- **Euthanasia/Palliative care**

Once again euthanasia is being debated in our courts. This time, Gloria Taylor, a British Columbia woman suffering from ALS (Lou Gherig’s disease), is asking the courts to legalize assisted suicide and euthanasia. Research from different jurisdictions around the world clearly indicates that there are some very serious concerns with this.

The courts will make a decision in 2012. Watch for the decision to be appealed to the Supreme Court of Canada, regardless of the outcome. The question is whether or not the SCC will hear the case given that they heard a similar one (Sue Rodriguez) in 1993. In 2010, Members of Parliament decisively voted down Bloc Quebecois MP Francine Lalonde’s bill on this same subject, by 228 to 59.

For more IMFC research on euthanasia, [click here](#).

- **Family taxation**

Prior IMFC research has shown that the single biggest challenge for families is finances.[1] For the past five years, the IMFC has been advocating for family income splitting. During the 2011 federal election campaign, the Conservative Party brought forward an election platform that supported family income splitting.[2] Similarly, the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario brought forward a family income splitting plank in their election platform. While the Conservative government has stated that they will not move forward with this policy until the budget is balanced, we have moved income splitting from the theoretical to the doable.

For more IMFC research on family finances, [click here](#).

- **Prostitution**

In the spring of 2011, the Ontario Court of Appeal heard a challenge to the laws against keeping a common bawdy house, communicating for the purposes of prostitution and living off the avails of the trade. The final decision has yet to be brought down and there is the likelihood that this too will be appealed to the Supreme Court of Canada in turn. Ultimately, a final decision that strikes these laws may legalize prostitution in Canada. Sweden and New Zealand have both legalized prostitution in past years.

To read the IMFC research on these countries and their policy on prostitution, [click here](#) and [here](#).

- **Polygamy**

At the time of this writing, time is running out for an appeal in the “Bountiful” case, emanating out of British Columbia. Without an appeal, the current laws banning polygamy will remain in place. However, the question of the law’s validity outside of BC may be in question, because it was not ruled on at the Supreme Court of Canada. Justice Robert Bauman issued the November ruling and “found polygamy was still harmful to children and women and they far outweighed the religious freedoms of Mormons.”[3] Another consideration is that in recent years there has been an influx of some cultural groups that advocate polygamy. This means the issue may continue to come up.

- **Abortion**

Yes, the “A” word. There is a huge misconception in Canada regarding the laws governing abortion. The truth is we don’t have any laws regarding abortion in Canada– it’s open season on the unborn. Over the years there have been several polls and Private Members Bills regarding the need to at least discuss this further. Medical technology has given us greater insights into the womb than we have ever had before. The discussion is ongoing in the public square. While a few MPs have indicated their interest in this debate, many others need to jump on board as well, understanding that this issue is not off limits in a free and democratic society.[4]

To read more of the IMFC’s work on the life issue, [click here](#).

Rest assured that on these and many other issues, the Institute of Marriage and Family Canada will work tirelessly to advance family-friendly research, policies and legislative options.

Please pass this document on to others that you feel would benefit by it, or ask them if they’d like to [sign up for free bi-monthly emails](#) themselves. These convey the latest research and information in family-related policy.

We would also be most grateful for your financial support – if you would like to assist us in supporting family friendly research please [click here](#).

We thank you for your support and look forward to continuing to work on your behalf in 2012.

From all of us at the IMFC, our very best for 2012.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dave Quist". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Dave Quist  
Executive Director

## Endnotes

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- [1] Institute of Marriage and Family Canada. (2005). *What's at the heart of the Canadian family?* Ottawa: Institute of Marriage and Family Canada, p. 9. Retrieved from [http://www.imfcanada.org/article\\_files/IMFC%20Report%20\(2\).pdf](http://www.imfcanada.org/article_files/IMFC%20Report%20(2).pdf)
- [2] Conservative Party of Canada. (2011, June 11). Conservative Party of Canada policy declaration, section 21. Retrieved from <http://www.conservative.ca/media/2011-CPC-Policy-E.pdf>
- [3] Ip, S. (2011, December 22). No appeal in polygamy case, *London Free Press*. Retrieved from <http://www.lfpress.com/news/canada/2011/12/21/19155206.html>
- [4] Galloway, G. (2011, December 22). Tory MP's call to revisit rights-of-unborn law fuels abortion debate, *The Globe and Mail*. Retrieved from <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/ottawa-notebook/tory-mp-fuels-abortion-debate-with-call-to-revisit-rights-of-unborn-law/article2279143/>