
For Immediate Release

Disappointing Supreme Court of Canada ruling on religious instruction in Quebec

February 17, 2012 (Ottawa) - Today the Supreme Court of Canada dismissed the appeal of Quebec parents, who requested an exemption for their children from the new Ethics and Religious Culture Program in Quebec schools on grounds that it violated their right to teach and pass on their religion to their children.

This is a disappointing decision. Parents are the primary educators of their children in all regards and must be allowed to both know what is being taught in their child's classroom and remove their children from classes as they see fit.

The Institute of Marriage and Family Canada believes that education is fundamentally an issue of parental jurisdiction. The Supreme Court decision says that "[t]he early exposure of children to realities that differ from those in their immediate family environment is a fact of life in society," in dismissing the appeal. This is true, however, parents should be able to say within the school system which realities of life they want their children to be exposed to and at what age. The school should look to parents for direction on this point and be able to accommodate.

"This isn't society exposing new realities to children, this is the state deciding to do so at the expense of parents who would prefer otherwise," says IMFC researcher Peter Jon Mitchell.

Each province must create space for parents in this regard. This is one of the main recommendations of a report written this month called "[Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy reviewed.](#)"

This report reviews Ontario's provincial strategy and clarifies the bigger picture around some of the recent decisions made in that province with regards to equity, tolerance and bullying in Ontario's schools. Parents have been justifiably concerned and confused over some of the government's actions, which include strong-arming the separate school boards into mandating gay/straight alliances.

"Parents need to be actively engaged in the school system and they need to hold school boards and trustees accountable in every province," says researcher Peter Jon Mitchell.

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