



Catholic Civil Rights League

Ligue Catholique pour les Droits de l'Homme

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27 September, 2006

School District No. _____

Dear Sir/Madam:

I am writing to express the opposition of the Catholic Civil Rights League to the agreement signed between the provincial government and homosexual activists Murray and Peter Corren. The agreement gives them, and unspecified third parties, unprecedented consultant status in the development of K-12 curriculum dealing with homosexual conduct and relationships, and could result in parents being denied the ability to remove their children from classes or lessons that would subvert the religious, moral and cultural traditions of their families. Further, the agreement may impose unacceptable demands upon teachers who are unwilling to assert the normality or moral acceptability of homosexual conduct or relationships, and may also adversely affect their opportunities for promotion and advancement. The League is not alone in its concerns, the validity of which were recently acknowledged by the National Post.

It is important that school trustees, administrators and teachers understand that citizens do not surrender freedom of conscience and religion as a condition of attending a public school, nor do parents surrender their authority to the state, to a union, to a profession or to special interest activists when they entrust their children to a public school system. Catholic teaching is that parents remain the primary educators of their children, and that this primacy is not primacy only in order of time and importance, but in order of authority, regardless of religious affiliation. The Catholic Church asserts that parental authority to closely supervise the moral education of their children is inalienable; it cannot be suppressed or revoked by a private agreement between the government and special interest activists, nor by fiat of the Ministry of Education.

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The Ministry's unilateral decision with respect to changing the curriculum threatens to place school districts and school administrators in an adversarial relationship with objecting parents. The consequences and costs associated with this will be borne by principally by school districts and staff. The Catholic Civil Rights League will assist parents in such circumstances, both privately and publicly, and will call upon other community organizations and groups to do the same. However, we suggest that it will be in the best interests of all concerned if the government can be persuaded to revisit its arbitrary exclusion of others from the role assigned to the Correns, and the suggestion that parents cannot withdraw their children from classes they find morally objectionable. The League would welcome such a development.

In any case, we require your school district's stated intention, policy or guidelines on these issues. Specifically, we want to know if it intends to compel students to attend classes or lessons that their parents judge are contrary to the individual needs of their children, or that they find morally objectionable or subversive or offensive with respect to their religious, moral and cultural traditions. We also require your school district's position on the exercise of freedom of conscience by teachers. Specifically, does your district intend to compel teachers to deliver curriculum materials to which they object for reasons of conscience? These questions have become relevant to the entire curriculum, not just the elective Grade 12 course, because of plans to introduce changes to numerous subjects.

Should your school district intend to adopt such policies, we would appreciate having your explanation of how they are consistent with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Included with this letter are references that will assist you to better appreciate the position of the League on this and related issues. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Sean Murphy, Director
CCRL Western Region

References:

Some of the following documents, such as the Code of Canon Law, pertain only to Catholics. Most (the Charter of Rights of the Family is an exception) were written primarily with a Catholic audience in mind. However, statements concerning the authority of parents in the education of their children can be applied to all parents, regardless of religious affiliation.

Charter of the Rights of the Family **Holy See, 22 October, 1983**

Preamble: Considering that:

- D. the family, a natural society, exists prior to the State or any other community, and possess inherent rights which are inalienable;
- E. the family constitutes. . . a community of love and solidarity, which is uniquely suited to teach and transmit cultural, ethical, social, spiritual and religious values, essential for the development and well-being of its own members and of society;
- J. the rights, the fundamental needs, the well-being and values of the family, even though they are progressively safeguarded in some cases, are often ignored and not rarely undermined by laws, institutions, and socioeconomic programmes;

the Holy See . . . now presents this *Charter of Rights of the Family* and urges all States, International Organizations and all interested Institutions and persons to promote respect for these rights, and to secure their effective recognition and observance.

Article 5

Since they have conferred life on their children, parents have an original, primary and inalienable right to educate them; hence they must be acknowledged as the first and foremost educators of their children.

- a) Parents have the right to educate their children in conformity with their moral and religious convictions, taking into account the cultural traditions of the family which favour the good and the dignity of the child; they should also receive from society the necessary aid and assistance to perform their educational role properly. . .
 - c) Parents have the right to ensure that their children are not compelled to attend classes which are not in agreement with their own moral and religious convictions. In particular, sex education is a basic right of the parents and must always be carried out under their close supervision, whether at home or in educational centers chosen and controlled by them. . .
 - e) The primary right of parents to educate their children must be upheld in all forms of collaboration between parents, teachers and school authorities, and particularly in forms of participation designed to give citizens a voice in the functioning of schools and in the formulation and implementation of educational policies. . .
- http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/family/documents/rc_pc_family_doc_19831022_family-rights_en.html

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The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality
Pontifical Council for the Family, 8 December, 1995

Recommendations for parents and educators

113. It is recommended that parents be aware of their educational role and defend and carry out this primary right and duty. It follows that any educative activity, related to education for love and carried out by persons outside the family, must be subject to the parents' acceptance of it and must be seen not as a substitute but as a support for their work. . .

Recommendations for parents

114.1 It is recommended that parents associate with other parents, not only in order to protect, maintain or fill out their own role as the primary educators of their children, especially in the area of education for love, but also to fight against damaging forms of sex education and to ensure that their children will be educated according to Christian principles and in a way that is consonant with their personal development.

115.2 In the case where parents are helped by others in educating their own children for love, it is recommended that *they keep themselves precisely informed on the content and methodology with which such supplementary education is imparted*. No one can bind children or young people to secrecy about the content and method of instruction provided outside the family.

116.3 We are aware of the difficulty and often the impossibility for parents *to participate fully in all supplementary instruction provided outside the home*. Nevertheless, they have the right to be informed about the structure and content of the programme. In all cases, their right to be present during classes cannot be denied.

117.4 It is recommended that parents attentively follow every form of sex education that is given to their children outside the home, *removing their children whenever this education does not correspond to their own principles*. However, such a decision of the parents must not become grounds for discrimination against their children . . .

Recommendations for all educators

120.3 It is recommended that respect be given to *the right of the child or young person to withdraw from any form of sexual instruction imparted outside the home*. Neither the children nor other members of their family should ever be penalized or discriminated against for this decision.

- http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/family/documents/rc_pc_family_doc_08121995_human-sexuality_en.html

Catechism of the Catholic Church

1653 . . . parents are the principal and first educators of their children. . .

2221 The fecundity of conjugal love cannot be reduced solely to the procreation of children, but must extend to their moral education and their spiritual formation . . . The right and duty of parents to educate their children are primordial and inalienable.

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2229 As those first responsible for the education of the children, parents have the right to *choose a school for them* which corresponds to their own convictions. This right is fundamental. As far as possible parents have the duty of choosing schools that will best help them in their task as Christian educators. Public authorities have the duty of guaranteeing this parental right and of ensuring the concrete conditions for its exercise.

- <http://www.scborromeo.org/ccc.htm>
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Code of Canon Law [1983]

796(2) There must be the closest cooperation between parents and the teachers to whom they entrust their children to be educated. In fulfilling their task, teachers are to collaborate closely with the parents and willingly listen to them; associations and meetings of parents are to be set up and held in high esteem.

799 Christ's faithful are to strive to secure that in the civil society the laws which regulate the formation of the young, also provide a religious and moral education in the schools that is in accord with the conscience of the parents.

- http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG1104/_INDEX.HTM
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John Paul II

Letter to Families, 2 February, 1994

16. . . *Parents are the first and most important educators* of their own children, and they also possess a fundamental competence in this area: they are educators because they are parents. They share their educational mission with other individuals or institutions, such as the Church and State. But the mission of education must always be carried out in accordance with a proper application of the *principle of subsidiarity*. This implies the legitimacy and indeed the need of giving assistance to the parents, but finds its intrinsic and absolute limit in their prevailing right and their actual capabilities . . . Subsidiarity thus complements paternal and maternal love and confirms its fundamental nature, inasmuch as all other participants in the process of education are only able to carry out their responsibilities *in the name of the parents, with their consent* and, to a certain degree, *with their authorization*.

- http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/letters/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_02021994_families_en.html
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John Paul II

The Christian Family in the Modern World (*Familiaris Consortio*) 22 November, 1981

36. . . .parents must be acknowledged as the first and foremost educators of their children. Their role as educators is so decisive that scarcely anything can compensate for their failure in it. . . . The right and duty of parents to give education is *essential*, since it is connected with the transmission of human life; it is *original and primary* with regard to the educational role of others, on account of the uniqueness of the loving relationship between parents and children; and it is *irreplaceable and inalienable*, and therefore incapable of being entirely delegated to others or usurped by others.

37. . . . Sex education, which is a basic right and duty of parents, must always be carried out under their attentive guidance, whether at home or in educational centres chosen and controlled by them. In this regard, the Church reaffirms the law of subsidiarity, which the school is bound to observe when it cooperates in sex education, by entering into the same spirit that animates the parents. . . .

40. . . . The right of parents to choose an education in conformity with their religious faith must be absolutely guaranteed . . . those in society who are in charge of schools must never forget that the parents have been appointed by God himself as the first and principal educators of their children and their right is completely inalienable.

But corresponding to their right, parents have a serious duty to commit themselves totally to a cordial and active relationship with the teachers and school authorities. If ideologies opposed to the Christian faith are taught in the schools, the family must join with other families . . . and with all its strength and with wisdom help the young not to depart from the faith. . .

46. . . .the family, which in God's plan is the basic cell of society and a subject of rights and duties before the State or any other community, finds itself the victim of society, of the delays and slowness with which it acts, and even of its blatant injustice.

For this reason, the Church openly and strongly defends the rights of the family against the intolerable usurpations of society and the State. In particular, the Synod Fathers mentioned the following rights of the family:

(among 14 rights enumerated, the following) . . .the right to bring up children in accordance with the family's own traditions and religious and cultural values, with the necessary instruments, means and institutions. . .

- http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/letters/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_02021994_families_en.html

Vatican Council II
Decree on Christian Education (28 October, 1965)

3. As it is the parents who have given life to their children, on them lies the gravest obligation of educating their family. They must therefore be recognized as being primarily and principally responsible for their education. The role of parents in education is of such importance that it is almost impossible to provide an adequate substitute . . .

6. Parents, who have a primary and inalienable duty and right in regard to the education of their children, should enjoy the fullest liberty in their choice of school. The public authority, therefore, whose duty it is to protect and defend the liberty of the citizens, is bound according to the principles of distributive justice to ensure that public subsidies to schools are so allocated that parents are truly free to select schools for their children in accordance with their conscience.

7. . . .the Church is deeply grateful to those public authorities and associations which, taking into consideration the pluralism of contemporary society, and showing due respect for religious liberty, assist families to ensure that the education of their children in all schools is given in accordance with the moral and religious principles of the family.

Pius XII
Encyclical: On the Function of the State in the Modern World, 20 October, 1939

. . . there would be danger lest the primary and essential cell of society, the family, with its well being and its growth, should come to be considered from the narrow standpoint of national power, and lest it be forgotten that man and the family are by nature anterior to the State, and that the Creator has given to both of them powers and rights and assigned them a mission and a charge that correspond to undeniable natural requirements . . . The charge laid by God on parents to provide for the material and spiritual good of their offspring and to procure for them a suitable training saturated with the true spirit of religion, cannot be wrested from them without grave violation of their rights.

Pius XII
Encyclical: On the Church in Germany (*Mit brennender Sorge*),14 March, 1937

37. Conscientious parents, aware of their duty in the matter of education, have a primary and original right to determine the education of the children given to them by God in the spirit of the true faith and in agreement with its principles and ordinances. Laws or other regulations concerning schools that disregard the rights of parents guaranteed to them by the natural law, or by threat and violence nullify those rights, contradict the natural law and are utterly and essentially immoral.

- http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_14031937_mit-brennender-sorge_en.html

Pius XI

Encyclical: Christian Education of Youth, 31 December, 1929

. . . The family therefore holds directly from the Creator the mission and hence the right to educate the offspring, a right inalienable because inseparably joined to the strict obligation, a right anterior to any right whatever of civil society and of the State, and therefore inviolable on the part of any power on earth. (B.2.a)

(Quoting 1917 Code of Canon Law 1113) “Parents are under a grave obligation to see to the religious and moral education of their children, as well as to their physical and civic training, as far as they can, and moreover to provide for their temporal well-being.” On this point the common sense of mankind is in such complete accord, that they would be in open contradiction with it who dared to maintain that the children belong to the State before they belong to the family, and that the State has an absolute right over their education. (B.2.b)

- http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_31121929_divini-illius-magistri_en.html

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