

ONTARIO CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

To: Diocesan Marriage Contacts

Re: Update #10, March 7, 2005

The Special Committee on Bill C-38

It is imperative that the Chair of the Special Committee, Marcel Proulx MP receive as many letters as possible indicating the desire of the Canadian public for hearing on marriage to be held around the country. We need to insist that all who request a hearing be given one and that written submissions be requested from the public. The Committee also has the authority to pay expenses. We should ask that they pay the expenses of presenters who have to travel significant distances to make a presentation.

Some thoughts on presentations from Norah Madden of St. Patrick's Parish Mississauga:

Tom,

I have been reading through the transcripts from the last marriage hearings in the spring of 2003. Two things are very striking: first, the fact that there were so few presentations from our side compared with those in favour of same-sex 'marriage', and next, the quality of the presentations themselves.

The transcripts for April 11 included a presentation from the OCCB, one from Natalie Hudson, two from lesbian couples (one of whose sons also spoke) and an EGALE lawyer who was appearing as an individual as the group had presented earlier. While the presentations from the Bishops and Natalie Hudson were calm, reasoned and logical it was quite obvious that the personal compelling stories by the other witnesses was what engaged the committee members.

I think we need to get more passionate. We need families to speak about needing a father and mother, children speaking about needing a dad, single and divorced people telling how an opposite sex parent is needed and missed. Some lawyers and doctors giving their individual and expert witness would help too.

REAL Women is saying that we need to "inundate" this committee with requests to appear before it: why not have as many families and individuals as possible do just this. Each parish could run a workshop and provide a kind of general template. Those who actually got selected could be coached. Just some thoughts...

Norah Madden

Timelines

In the House of Commons, they are now at the stage of ten-minute speeches. The House

will not operate in the weeks of March 14 and March 28. These may be weeks in which MP's can be approached in their ridings.

With the number of 10-minute speeches scheduled and the breaks, it is likely that the vote on 2nd Reading will occur before the middle of April. We should be prepared to make another push at influencing MP's in the first two weeks of April. Please try to encourage people to meet with their MP – this could be group venture for parish groups. The next most effective method is a **hand-written** letter. Phone calls and e-mails, although less impressive, also help. In some areas of the province, rallies are being organized outside the constituency offices of some MP's. On these occasions, numbers are important.

The Novena to St. Joseph

The prayers and litany for this Novena have now been made available to dioceses and lay groups. This Novena can be prayed by groups, as part of church services or privately. It is a very important witness to the fact that for us this is not a political struggle, this is a fundamental part of our lives and a contribution to the building of the Kingdom.

Rally at Queen's Park, Saturday, March 5, 2005

There were about 400 hundred people present at a rally at Queen's Park in support of marriage on Saturday, March 5. The rally was organized by the Knights of Columbus and United Front Canada , a group based in Mississauga but with an outreach across the country.

The participants in the rally were from many faith and ethnic traditions: Sikh, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhists, Koreans and several Christian groups. The faith commitment and witness of all of these groups was impressive. The rally and march, down University Avenue, along Queen and up Yonge, was very orderly and made its point well. One of the main speakers was Msgr. Terence D'Souza from St. Francis Xavier Parish in Mississauga.

Some excerpts from Fr. D'Souza's speech:

Marriage, as the union of a man and a woman, is rooted in the very nature of the human condition for the procreation of children and thus the ensuring of a future generation. As such it pre-dates any religion or state. It is much older than any Constitution or Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

With its natural openness to produce human life and thus create the human family it constitutes the very basis of human society and is a nation's fundamental building block. No government has the right to tamper with nature.

There are human rights which say: Men and women must be paid the same wage for the same work; an employer may not refuse to hire someone because of skin colour; landlords may not discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation. These decisions uphold the rights of the individual and at the same time strengthen Canadian society. They encourage us to recognize the humanity of the other person. But they do not destroy

reality.

In the matter of marriage, however, the committed union of two people of the same sex is not the same reality as the committed union of one man and one woman...

As a social institution, marriage, as we know it, is concerned with the common good, not individual rights. Same-sex unions, however, are totally concerned with the wants and desires of individual adults and do not consider the common good as defined by nature.

We, therefore, strongly object to the government's attempt to change the natural definition of marriage. This is a total destruction of the natural social order that gives meaning and purpose to life and hope for a future.

The main themes touched on by the various speakers were:

- Solidarity of basic values among the groups and the government's indifference to them,
- The impact of the proposed change to the definition of marriage on children and on future generations,
- The democratic deficit in the whole process.

It is noteworthy that I did not hear or see one mention event in the media, although a march for women, which took place on the same day, did rate coverage.

Rally in Ottawa

A group of lay people in Ottawa is organizing a rally on Parliament Hill on April 9. They are looking for a very large turnout. This could occur close to the time of the vote on 2nd reading. As more information becomes available, I will be passing it on to you.

FamilyFest

Focolare and several other lay groups are organizing an event known as FamilyFest at Convocation Hall, Toronto, on April 16, 2005 from 8:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m.. This is an annual celebration of marriage and the family. There will be speakers and other activities. The cost is \$12:00. The contact person is Terry Gunn czmcanada@rogers.com . I will also forward more information about his event as I obtain it.

National Coordination

The bishops of Canada have now set up a Task Force to coordinate efforts on the marriage issue. The Task Force will be supported by designated contact people in St. John's, Halifax, Quebec City, Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, Edmonton and Vancouver and have membership from the Catholic Office for Life and the Family. A coordinator has been hired to head up this effort. She is Mme Anne Gagné from the Diocese of Sault Ste Marie.

The Web Site

The following have been added:

English

- A Letter from the Catholic Office for Life and the Family to all MP's and

Senators

- The Novena to St. Joseph
- The Membership of the Special Committee
- The Voting Intentions of MP's

French

- Lettre de l'Office Catholique pour la vie et la famille aux membres du parlement et aux sénateurs
- La novaine à Saint Joseph
- Problématiques à l'appui du mariage traditionnel
- Une conférence sur le mariage pour le professeur Gérard Lévesque

Tom Reilly

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