

ONTARIO CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

To: Diocesan Marriage Contacts

Re: Update #8, February 21, 2005

The Special Committee

We still do not have information on the membership of the Special Committee which is to deal with Bill C-38. Nevertheless, we need to begin preparing to present to it on the assumption that we will have the opportunity. Please encourage groups in your dioceses to prepare now and apply to appear before it. This will not be a waste. The Committee will almost certainly accept written briefs. If it does not, all of those prepared briefs can be sent to the offices of the Prime Minister and the Attorney General.

Today, by separate e-mail, I will send you some material which should give groups or individuals a place to begin with their preparations.

As soon as we have details about the Committee, I will forward them to you.

Meeting at St. Francis Xavier in Mississauga

The pastor of St. Francis Xavier Parish in Mississauga, Msgr. Terence D'Souza, organized a Town Hall meeting on Friday, February 18, 2005. There were more than 300 people at the meeting. They covered a very broad representation of religious groups, including Muslim, Christian, Sikh and others. The meeting was addressed by four MP's: Stephen Harper, Paul Szabo, Garry Carr and Caroline Parrish. There were many comments and questions from the audience.

Some interesting points which emerged:

- There is still time to change the minds of some MP's.
- The cause is not lost.
- The issue will not go away, no matter what the outcome is at this juncture.

Here is an excerpt from Fr. D'Souza's notice for the meeting:

"Future Ages will Wonder at Us" Pericles

It was a bright winter day as the citizens of Athens streamed outside the city gates, about 431 years before the birth of Jesus Christ. The mood was somber, the occasion grave. In front of them lay rows of cypress coffins, each containing the body of a young warrior – the first casualties in the war with Sparta.

In rapt silence they listened as an orator, Pericles, son of Xanthippus, was delivering the funeral oration. He praised the city for which the young men had died: "Athens, alone, of the states we know, comes to her testing time in a greatness that surpasses what was imagined of her ... Future ages will wonder at us, as the present age does now."

The audience stirred with pride. Breathless, they hung upon every word. Here was history in the making, for they were creating a kind of society the world had never before seen, where, as Pericles said, “Power rests with the majority instead of the few.”

For Pericles was talking about DEMOCRACY – a Greek word to describe, “rule by the people.”

In the words of Pericles, we come now to our testing time – in a call to rise above the ordinary, from mere navel-gazing to true greatness. It is imperative, therefore, that we make our views known in no uncertain terms to our elected representatives, vis-à-vis the government’s highly questionable move towards changing the traditional definition of marriage as the union of one man and one woman, in order to extend the civil right of marriage to same-sex couples.

The Senate

Last week, the Hon. Marisa Ferretti Barth issued a strong statement in support of retaining the traditional definition of marriage. Senator Ann Cools has been a very strong supporter of traditional marriage all along. There may be more support in the Senate than we have assumed to date.

National Coordination

A number of bishops from across Canada have been in contact with each other to ensure greater coordination of efforts throughout the country. There will be more about this in future updates.

Web Site

Added last week were:

English

- Pastoral Letter from the CCCB on the Marriage Issue
- “Heavenly Deception” – an article by Bishop Fred Henry of Calgary
- A Pastoral Letter by Archbishop Anthony Meagher of Kingston
- Letter to the Prime Minister by Archbishop Brendan O’Brien, President of CCCB

French

- Pastoral Letter from the CCCB
- Letter to the Prime Minister by Archbishop Brendan O’Brien, President of the CCCB

Tom Reilly