



# The Parental Rights in Education Defense Fund

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**For immediate release**

## School board faces legal proceedings after suppressing parental rights in the name of “Equity”

**Toronto, September 10, 2012** - Just as children are beginning a new school year, an Ontario public school board is facing legal proceedings for refusing to accommodate the religious beliefs of a Christian parent. The Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board has denied the father of two elementary school children the right to be notified about lessons which may contradict his Christian beliefs. This prevents him from withdrawing his children from such classroom lessons or exercises.

On September 10, 2012, a non-profit organization, *The Parental Rights In Education Defense Fund* (PRIEDF) is holding a press conference at 9:00am in the Queens Park Media Studio. The event seeks to draw attention to the plight of this beleaguered parent who has been respectfully but consistently requesting religious accommodation for his family since September 2010.

“This family holds sincere religious beliefs which guide their views on various issues, including marriage, family and human sexuality. This father quite reasonably asked the school board to respect his religious beliefs by giving him advance notice of any lessons or materials that would contradict his sincerely held religious beliefs”, said Lou Iacobelli, chairperson for the legal defense fund PRIEDF. “Instead of tolerance and respect, the father was met with the condescending suggestion that if he didn’t like the curriculum, he ought to put his kids in a private school or homeschool them instead. That’s the epitome of intolerance.”

The Applicant, Dr. Steve Turloukis, said he is seeking a court order “to acknowledge my inherent parental rights to direct the spiritual and moral education of my own children. They’re my kids, not the government’s, not the Hamilton-Wentworth School Board’s. I don’t believe that teachers are ‘co-parents’ with equal say in my children’s religious beliefs.” He continued, “My request is reasonable. Just give me advance notice of lessons, activities or materials which touch upon certain subjects, and if I deem it necessary, permit me to withdraw my kids from that particular class or exercise”. Dr. Turloukis notes that his request is consistent with accommodations suggested by the Ministry of Education. Former Minister of Education Kathleen Wynn has endorsed the type of religious accommodation Dr. Turloukis is seeking. In a 2008 letter Minister Wynn stated: "Should a component of any course conflict with a religious belief held by a parent or a student aged eighteen or older, the right to withdraw from that component of the course shall be granted on the written request of the parent or student."

### **About The Parental Rights In Education Defense Fund:**

Our legal defense fund was formed after observing that parental rights, notably the right to raise and educate children in a manner consistent with a family’s religious and moral beliefs, were being consistently challenged. PRIEDF exists to help parents by assisting them in obtaining legal counsel to defend their fundamental, inherent rights as the primary educators of their children.

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