

“PROTECT GIRLS AND WOMEN FROM HATE PROPAGANDA” - MEDIA VIOLENCE COALITION CALLS FOR ALL PARTY SUPPORT

Toronto, Ontario, April 16, 2007: The Media Violence Coalition comprising Ontario school trustees, principals, teachers, students, parents, and police is calling for all party support to unanimously pass Bill C-254, a Private Member's Bill that adds women to the groups protected under the *Criminal Code* law on public incitement of hatred.

On Thursday April 19, 2007, Liberal MP Borys Wrzesnewskij (Etobicoke Centre) will re-introduce a motion in the House of Commons requesting all party support for Bill C-254, his Private Member's Bill that adds women to the groups protected under the *Criminal Code* law on public incitement of hatred. Currently, the law only protects those identified by colour, race, religion, ethnic origin and sexual orientation.

On January 17, an Ontario coalition of trustees, principals, teachers, students, parents, and police made a public appeal to the Federal Minister of Justice to amend the Criminal Code public incitement of hatred laws to conform to Section 15 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, thereby granting protection to girls and women.

In speaking at a Queen's Park media conference, Rhonda Kimberley-Young, past President of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, said:

Public incitement of hatred is acknowledged as a contributing factor in encouraging violence against a target group. **We believe that leaving girls and women off the list compromises their safety.** ... We are adding the voice of the media violence coalition to a long list of individuals and organizations that includes groups as diverse as the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, the Special Committee on Pornography and Prostitution, Law Reform Commission of Canada, and James Flaherty, Attorney General of Ontario, among others.

In 2005, Mr. Wrzesnewskij first introduced his Bill (as Bill C-385). Speaking in the House of Commons, he said: “By enacting this change to the *Criminal Code*, Parliament can begin to address the serious issue of promoting hatred and violence against women. This is an amendment that should have been made long ago. I hope my colleagues on all sides of the House will support this worthy and overdue initiative.”

The media violence coalition is calling for all party support to unanimously pass Bill C-254. Coalition spokesperson Dr. Peter Jaffe said, "When it comes to protections for women against public incitement of hatred, there is a serious gap between the Charter of Rights and the Criminal Code. This is a stark piece of "unfinished business" and you have to seriously wonder why it is taking so long to deal with it. Legislation is rarely a perfect solution but the proposed change to the Criminal Code sends a message that we as a society will no longer tolerate this failure to protect half of our citizens."

Adding women to the hate propaganda law has been recommended by:

- National Action Committee on the Status of Women (1983)
- Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women (1985)
- Special Committee on Pornography and Prostitution (1985)
- Law Reform Commission of Canada (1986)
- Raymond Hnatyshyn, Minister of Justice (1987)
- B'nai Brith League for Human Rights (1994)
- James Flaherty, Attorney General of Ontario (2000)
- Michael Bryant, MPP, Ontario Liberal Party Attorney General Critic (2000)
– Mr. Bryant is currently the Attorney General of Ontario
- Ontario Public School Boards' Association media violence coalition (2007), which includes
 - Canadian Centre for Abuse Awareness
 - Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario
 - Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association
 - Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association
 - Ontario Federation of Home & School Associations
 - Ontario Principals' Council
 - Ontario Provincial Police
 - Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation
 - Ontario Student Trustees' Association

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