



## NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **CENSORSHIP ON TRIAL: CIVIL LIBERTIES ASSOCIATION APPLIES TO INTERVENE IN IMPORTANT FREE SPEECH CASES**

The B.C. Civil Liberties Association is applying for leave to intervene in two important free speech cases before the federal and British Columbia human rights tribunals. At issue in both cases is whether the expression of controversial, even hateful expressions can be censored by the state via tribunals that traditionally protect the value of equality by sanctioning discrimination.

BCCLA President Rob Holmes: “Freedom of expression is a fundamental democratic value. Citizens of a democracy should be trusted to form their own judgments about the views expressed by others, including controversial and offensive comments. The BCCLA will seek to protect basic Charter rights so that opinions on all matters, including religion, can continue to be debated freely and without fear through all media of communication.”

Federally in *Warman v. Marc Lemire and Freedomsite*, the complaint focuses on anti-Semitic postings on a website run by Marc Lemire. In *Elmasry and Habib v. Rogers Publishing Ltd.*, the complainants object to an article by Mark Steyn’s entitled “The Future Belongs to Islam” that was published in McLean’s magazine in 2006.

Both the *Canadian Human Rights Act* and British Columbia’s *Human Rights Code* have provisions that prohibit the publication of material that is likely to promote hatred or contempt against an individual or group because of the race, colour, ancestry, place of origin, religion, marital status, family status, physical or mental disability, sex, sexual orientation or age of that person or group.

The BCCLA is Canada’s leading defender of free expression. The Association takes the position that citizens have a responsibility to condemn hateful speech and that the remedy to obnoxious, hurtful speech is to promote counter expression rather than permit state censorship.

BCCLA Vice-President Jason Gratl and Micah Rankin of Hunter Litigation Chambers represent the Association.

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