



NEWS RELEASE

British Columbia Civil Liberties Association
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For immediate release

BCCLA: Government Does the Right Thing on Polygamy

Vancouver, B.C. – The BC Civil Liberties Association applauded the decision of BC’s Attorney General Michael de Jong to refer the constitutionality of the criminal code section that makes polygamy illegal in Canada to the B.C. Supreme Court. In February of this year, the BCCLA called for the charges then being laid against alleged polygamists at Bountiful in the BC Interior to be dropped and for a reference of the constitutional question to the Supreme Court of BC.

“Attorney General de Jong has done the right thing in making this reference to the Court,” said BCCLA president Rob Holmes. “Assuming that the Attorney General’s office makes provision for there to be a genuine contest in how the issue is presented to the court, including, for example, by providing appropriate funding for amicus curiae counsel to be appointed, then the issues will be thoroughly dealt with and the public will have confidence in the process and in the result. The cause of justice is well served by this decision.”

The BCCLA has a long standing interest in the difficult issues of polygamy and an appropriate Canadian response. While the BCCLA recognizes that polygamous relationships raise genuine issues about protecting equal rights of children and women that should be carefully considered, the organization argues it does not follow that all polygamous relationships should be criminalized, as they are currently.

“We often enter public debate to inform the public of government actions that, in our view, threaten Canadian civil liberties,” said Holmes. “It is only right that we also speak up when the government takes decisions that reflect a healthy concern for Charter protections and the rule of law, as does this move by the AG’s office.”

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