



NEWS RELEASE

British Columbia Civil Liberties Association
February 4, 2010

For immediate release

BCCLA opposes ban on U Vic pro-life club

The University of Victoria student newspaper, *The Martlet*, is hosting a debate tomorrow evening on the recent recommendation of the UVic Student Society's Clubs Council to strip the campus pro-life club, *Youth Protecting Youth*, of its official status and funding. The recommendation comes in response to a recent complaint from the UVSS Women's Centre that pro-life advocacy "inherently discriminates" against women.

John Dixon of the BCCLA and Anastasia Pearse of YPY will argue that the club should not be punished for its pro-life advocacy, and they will be opposed by Joyce Arthur of *The Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada* and a representative of the campus pro-choice club, *Students for Choice*.

The BCCLA, which has a long history of successfully fighting for the reproductive autonomy of women, condemns the attempt to silence pro-life advocacy on the University of Victoria campus. Dixon says: "It should not be necessary for us to fight for freedom of conscience, opinion, and expression on a university campus. YPY's point of view may be unpopular and shared by only a minority of university students, but that is precisely why both democratic and academic freedoms need to be protected."

BCCLA President Robert Holmes added: "Public money should not be used to suppress free speech. A university and student society that target and suppress one set of views on a matter of public debate while smugly asking for more public funds and for the continuation of a law forcing all students to fund the student society commit an affront to democracy. The President of the university has been woefully silent about ensuring respect for freedom even though in his annual report to government seeking money he asserts: '...fundamental values of intellectual and ethical integrity, freedom of speech and freedom of inquiry, and equal rights and the dignity of all persons need to inform all of our actions and are a prerequisite to fulfilling the purpose of the university.' The Provincial Government asserts that it has an "Accountability Framework ...to promote institutional accountability" for the \$2.25 billion a year spent on advanced education and yet can't find the time to tell UVic to smarten up on this issue. Shame on them all."

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BACKGROUND AND DETAILS

What: Debate between John Dixon, BCCLA with Anastasia Pearse of Youth Protecting Youth against Joyce Arthur, Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada and a representative of Students for Choice

Time: 6:30pm, Friday, February 5th

Location: University of Victoria: David Lam Auditorium, MacLaurin Building

Background information:

http://www.aved.gov.bc.ca/instit_accountability_plans/docs/uvic_pr0910.pdf at page 9

http://www.bcbudget.gov.bc.ca/Annual_Reports/2008_2009/ae/ae.pdf at page 20.