



Original Declaration on Religious Arbitration in Family Law & Membership

The No Religious Arbitration Coalition

June 1, 2005

The following is a statement prepared by a broad coalition of organizations to respond to Marion Boyd's report on the use of religious principles in the application of the Arbitration Act for the resolution of family Law disputes.

We are shocked by the possibility of the erosion of equality rights as guaranteed in Sections 15 and 28 of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. We share a common position that the recommendations advanced in the report prepared for the Ontario government by Marion Boyd sanction the erosion of women's equality rights under the laws of Ontario. We believe that the *Arbitration Act* was not designed to accommodate family matters but was conceived of as a vehicle for commercial disputes. Stretched to this purpose, even with Ms. Boyd's "safeguards", it would effectively put at risk decades of legal reform in keeping with an equality and equal rights framework.

Our diverse organizations share one purpose with respect to:

- Exclusive use of family law legislation for the resolution of family disputes regardless of faith, ethnicity and culture
- No religious arbitration and/or any principles, which would undermine the equality guarantees of the *Charter* in the resolution of family matters

We are supported by an international coalition of groups watching closely the Ontario government's decision in relation to Boyd's report. Their concern for the potential erosion of women's rights within constitutional democracies based on religious justifications is in keeping with the provisions of the Canadian *Charter*, and with international agreements (i.e. the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women) to which Canada is a signatory. We demand that the Government of Ontario both understand the intent of these agreements and ensure that domestic laws and regulations are not in contravention of them.

Member Organizations

- Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes
- Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies (CAEFS) / Association canadienne des sociétés Elizabeth Fry (ACSEF)
- Canadian Auto Workers
- Canadian Council of Muslim Women
- Canadian Federation of University Women (CFUW) / la Fédération canadienne des femmes diplômées des universités (FCFDU)

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- Canadian Labour Congress / Congrès du travail du Canada
- Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAOW) / Institut canadien de recherches sur les femmes (ICREF)
- Centre D'Main de Femmes
- Centre Victoria pour femmes (Sudbury)
- Concerned Women of Ontario
- Education Wife Assault
- Fédération des femmes du Québec (FFQ)
- Fédération nationale des femmes canadiennes françaises
- Free Schools World Literacy
- Interlude House / Maison Interlude
- Interval House of Ottawa
- Klar Photography
- La Marg'elle de St-Rémi
- la Table féministe francophone de concertation provinciale de l'Ontario
- l'Association des femmes immigrantes de l'Outaouais
- l'Association canadienne des centres contre les agressions à caractère sexuel (ACCCACS) / Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centers (CASAC)
- L'association pour les droits de la femme et le développement (AWID) / Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID)
- Le Centre "Au Coeur des Femmes"
- Le Centre "Entre-Femmes"
- Le Réseau socioaction des femmes francophones
- L'équipe de La Passerelle
- L'R des centres de femmes du Québec
- MATCH International Centre / Centre International MATCH
- Métis National Council of Women / Conseil national des femmes métisses
- Metropolitan Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children (METRAC)
- Mouvement contre le viol et l'inceste.
- Mouvement ontarien des femmes immigrantes francophones (MOFIF)
- Multicultural Women's Organization of Newfoundland and Labrador
- Muslim Canadian Congress
- National Association of Women and the Law / Association nationale femmes et droit (ANFD)
- National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC) / Conseil national des femmes du Canada
- National Organization of Immigrant and Visible Minority Women of Canada (NOIVMWC) / Organisation nationale des femmes immigrantes et des femmes appartenant à une minorité visible du Canada (ONFIFMVC)
- Nelson House of Ottawa Carleton
- Northwestern Ontario Women's Centre
- Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses (OAITH)
- Ontario Federation of Labour
- Older Women's Network
- Ottawa Rape Crisis Centre

- PFLAG-Moncton Chapter
- Pictou County Women's Centre
- Provincial Council of Women of Ontario / Le conseil provincial des femmes de l'Ontario
- Provincial Council of Women of Québec / Le Conseil provincial des femmes du Québec
- Rights and Democracy / Droits et démocratie
- Réseau socioaction des femmes francophones de l'Est ontarien
- Transition House (Thunder Bay)
- Ukrainian Women's Association
- Women's Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF) / Fonds d'action et d'éducation juridiques pour les femmes (FAEJ)
- YWCA Canada
- YWCA Toronto

Individual Members

- Margaret Atwood
- Maude Barlow
- June Callwood
- Elizabeth Campbell
- Alice M. de Munnik
- Elise Devitt
- Shirley Douglas
- Gail Dunn
- Rick Hall
- Eldon Hay
- Barbara Hodgkinson
- Adrienne Kappes, Circle of Life
- Charles H. Kaufmann
- Najeeb Khan
- Helen & Mike Klar
- Michele Landsberg
- The Hon. Flora MacDonald
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- Susan Martin
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- Johnny Roberts
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