

For immediate release
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YWCA Toronto Applauds Premier's Difficult Leadership Decision

YWCA Toronto applauds the leadership Dalton McGuinty has shown on the matter of religious arbitration in Ontario.

As a founding member of the No Religious Arbitration Coalition, YWCA Toronto had called for amendments to the Arbitration Act that would prohibit the use of all religious laws in the resolution of family matters.

"We are thrilled that no one religion was singled out", states YWCA Toronto Executive Director, Heather McGregor. "It was the courageous work of our Muslim sisters that drove the agenda on this battle", added McGregor, noting the connection the YWCA Board of Directors forged with the Canadian Council of Muslim Women and a variety of other women's groups, labour organizations and Muslim advocates.

"McGuinty, and the women in the Liberal Caucus, have heard the substantive message underneath the raised voices", says McGregor. "The issue was one of the separation of religious laws and universal laws, open to public scrutiny and reform. As one of Canada's longest standing women's groups, we took up this battle to protect the universal access to equality guaranteed by that public system. To do so, we reached out to women of all faiths –and we will continue to do so. Freedom of religion is as important to us as the guarantee of equality. We believe that McGuinty's decision will allow these principles to continue in balance", continued McGregor.

YWCA Toronto will work closely with others to ensure that the redrafting of the Arbitration Act maintains the spirit of this announcement, and that all women of Ontario are free to live according to their faith without infringement on equality provisions in the Family Law Act of Ontario and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The YWCA is the city's only multi-service Association by, for and about women and girls. We welcome women of all faiths, sexual orientations, cultural affiliations and creeds. In 2004 we helped 49,000 Torontonians find a job, develop leadership, build confidence or flee violence through Housing and Support, Girls and Family Programs, and Employment & Skills Development.

For more information call Amanda Dale, Director of Advocacy & Communications, YWCA Toronto, 416-961-8100, x350, or 416-453-1916.

Or see www.ywca-toronto.org/index.htm and
www.ywca-toronto.org/get_involved/arbitration_intro.htm

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