



Christian Canadian Law School Denied Accreditation Because of Its Belief in Traditional Marriage

The Supreme Court in Canada has ruled that a Canadian evangelical Christian university can be denied accreditation for its law school simply because it supports traditional marriage, CBC reports.



In two separate 7-2 rulings, the Supreme Court [found](#) that the law societies of British Columbia and Ontario can indeed deny accreditation to Trinity Western University because of the university's community covenant that included a code of conduct that champions abstinence and heterosexual marriage. The court claimed that the covenant creates a barrier that prohibits LGBT students from attending the school.

The school's mandatory covenant agreement upholds the values and beliefs of the Christian faith, which one would expect from an evangelical Christian school. It reads:

In keeping with biblical and TWU ideals, community members voluntarily abstain from the following actions: communication that is destructive to TWU community life and inter-personal relationships, including gossip, slander, vulgar/obscene language, and prejudice; harassment or any form of verbal or physical intimidation, including hazing; lying, cheating, or other forms of dishonesty including plagiarism; stealing, misusing or destroying property belonging to others; sexual intimacy that violates the sacredness of marriage between a man and a woman; the use of materials that are degrading, dehumanizing, exploitive, hateful, or gratuitously violent, including, but not limited to pornography; drunkenness, under-age consumption of alcohol, the use or possession of illegal drugs, and the misuse or abuse of substances including prescribed drugs; the use or possession of alcohol on campus, or at any TWU sponsored event, and the use of tobacco on campus or at any TWU sponsored event.

But the Supreme Court found that the law societies were acting well within their powers to decide against accrediting Trinity Western University's law school and that the public interest of the legal profession has given them the right to promote equality and equal access within the bar to prevent alleged harm to LGBT students, despite the fact that doing so violates religious freedoms.

Law Society of B.C. President Miriam Kresivo agrees with the court's determination that law societies have a responsibility to "uphold the rights of all persons and to protect the public interest."

"The court recognized that the Law Society has an overarching interest in protecting equality and human rights," he claims, "as well as ... removing inequitable barriers to the legal profession, in carrying out our duties and ensuing public confidence."

But others view the decisions as dangerous infringements on religious freedoms.



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on June 20, 2018

Andrew Bennett, director of the religious freedom institute at the Christian-based think-tank Cardus, said the rulings could affect other so-called public-interest professions, including medicine, and could be broadened to include other religious schools.

He said the Supreme Court affirmed the notion of an “imagined conflict” between sexual and religious identities. “This is not a question of religious identity, it’s not a question of sexual identity. It’s a question of fundamental freedoms, and also about the freedom to live your faith publicly,” he said.

According to Gerald D. Chipeur, Q.C. of Miller Thomson LLP, the court’s rulings create “significant limitation[s] on the rights of all Canadians to freedom of religion.”

Furthermore, he [opined](#) that the rulings have created a system in which “anyone who is making decisions regarding the rights of others” can now “violate the religious freedoms of Canadians.”

Cheryl Milne, executive director of the David Asper Centre for Constitutional Rights at the University of Toronto, also expressed concerns that the court’s rulings have created a precedent in which quasi-judicial bodies can now make controversial decisions.

“Everything from residential tenancies are impacted,” she said. “People’s lives can be significantly impacted by the decisions made by administrators, whether that’s tribunals that have hearings, or individuals that are reviewing applications for things, or ruling on complaints.”

There are plenty of other law schools that LGBT students could attend that do not subscribe to religious philosophies that may frown upon their lifestyles, but rather than show tolerance to all viewpoints, including those of Christians, the state once again sees it fit to control private institutions and punish them for failing to adhere to the state’s moral standards.

Critics of the court’s rulings note that it underscores Canada’s growing intolerance for diversity. Janet Epp Buckingham, a TWU professor who helped develop the law school proposal, observed, “We feel that this is a loss for diversity in Canada. Canada has traditionally upheld values of diversity for a broad array of religious views. So we’re very disappointed in the way the Supreme Court of Canada has ruled today.”



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