



**Welcome 2013! The IMFC has compiled this list of notable family items from 2012—a top ten of sorts—in an effort to ease you back into the working world after the holidays. Happy New Year!**

By Peter Jon Mitchell and Andrea Mrozek

### [Prime Minister Harper's very, very secret agenda](#)

No, it wasn't New Year's fireworks that lit the sky, rather the media lighting their hair on fire in what had to be one of the biggest non-stories of the year. On January 12, *The Globe and Mail* bellowed in a sub-head, "Thousands of gay couples who were wed in Canada aren't legally married." Was it the Prime Minister's *very secret*, hidden agenda unveiled? The real story was rather drab; foreign same-sex couples who married in Canada couldn't get divorced because of a one-year residency requirement. In short, there was a legal oversight in crafting the redefinition of marriage in 2005. But stories about legal paperwork gone uncompleted just don't pack the same kind of punch. The government moved to resolve the issue, which soon disappeared from the headlines.

### [The case of the missing data](#)

Ontario's Bill 122 slipped into effect quietly in January 2012. The goal of the legislation was to increase public access to information from hospitals and clinics. Instead, through stealth changes to the Freedom of Information and Privacy Protection Act (FIPPA), Ontario citizens no longer have access to information about certain public health issues such as patient care quality and abortion statistics. It's ironic, indeed, when a bill to increase transparency results in a blockade on previously available information. Anyone, pro-life or pro-choice, should be concerned about this case of the missing data, which remains unsolved.

### [\(Early\) learning the hard way](#)

Don Drummond, former chief economist of TD Bank, was tasked by Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty to identify how the province could get back on solid fiscal footing. Drummond recommended abandoning all-day kindergarten. The government ignored this, leaving the province in a decidedly poor fiscal position as Premier McGuinty stepped down. Lesson not learned.

### [Swedish for common nonsense](#)

Ikea may be the commercial home of Swedish common sense, but parents in Sweden face a whole lot of nonsense. On the first day of March, the IMFC became aware that homeschooling father Jonas Himmelstrand was forced to move to Finland, having been fined the extraordinary amount of USD \$26,000 for homeschooling. The freedom to educate as parents see fit is under attack across the globe, including in Canada, where on February 17, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that Quebec parents do not have the right to remove their children from the controversial Ethics and Religious Culture Program.

### [An R-rated night at the museum](#)

In May, Ottawa's Museum of Science and Technology held a preview for its "Sex: A tell-all exhibition" prior to opening its doors. The exhibition invited kids to touch erogenous zones on mannequins alongside videos teaching masturbation. The "tell-all" was really a "do as you please," failing to connect sex to marriage or commitment of any kind. The IMFC called for the lights to be turned out at the heavily government-funded museum. While the videos of masturbation were removed, and the age of entry raised, the exhibit remains. The top experts on this sensitive topic challenge our children to nothing more than "do whatever you feel like"—your tax dollars at work.

### **The academic witch-hunt**

In July, Mark Regnerus of the University of Texas at Austin published [How different are the adult children of parents who have same-sex relationships? Findings from the New Family Structures Study in Social Science Research](#). Far less rigorous studies on the topic have been reported with gusto in the media, yet this one was largely ignored, except to criticise – because of what the results revealed. Regnerus, who spoke at the 2011 IMFC policy conference on young adults and marriage, takes painstaking care in his research and methodology. He was thoroughly investigated for "scientific misconduct," and was [fully vindicated](#) by the university and the journal that published his study. The academy is definitely in decline when research cannot be done unless it comes to politically-correct conclusions.

### [Parenting is hard enough without threat of legal sanctions](#)

In September, the *Canadian Medical Association Journal* published an editorial calling for a repeal of Section 43 in the criminal code, which allows parents to spank their children. Though she's tried before without success, Senator Hervieux-Payette introduced Bill S-214 in November in another attempt to ban the practice. No word yet on whether time-outs, withdrawing privileges or stern lectures will also be banned: None of these are more or less harmful than spanking, used appropriately.

### [The traditional family still modern enough](#)

September 19 marked Statistics Canada's release of new census family-related data. Media across the country trumpeted the death of the traditional family—as if that were a good thing. In any event, as Lorne Gunter wrote in the *Edmonton Sun*, it's hard to see how a family form that still attracts 67 percent of all families can be called dead. Today's families are, more or less, "traditional" families, in 67 percent of cases, anyway.

## Banning bullies

2012 was the year of anti-bullying legislation across Canada. Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, and Alberta all introduced or passed legislation addressing school bullying, while BC launched a province-wide anti-bullying campaign. The other provinces and territories have strategies or have indicated that anti-bullying legislation may be on the legislative horizon. Legislation can provide legal force to policies and programs, but over a decade of lawmaking in the US demonstrates that bullying can't be legislated away. Where adults are absent, bullies abound. Families in partnership with educators and local communities hold the key to effectively addressing bullying. Will legislators notice?

### **A reward for much more than just “time served”**



(L to R: Derek Miedema, Eloise Cataudella, Dave Quist, Andrea Mrozek, Peter Jon Mitchell)

On a rainy December 17 in the evening, the Institute of Marriage and Family Canada staff set out to Parliament Hill, where Dave Quist, former executive director, received a Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal, thereby proving that jail time is not a prerequisite to receiving the honour. (Member of Parliament Maurice Vellacott nominated Dave alongside Linda Gibbons and Mary Wagner, who have both done jail time for their protesting of abortion and bubble zone laws.) Congratulations Dave. It's a fitting honour for “doing time” in the family policy trenches.

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