

For Immediate Release

The problem with anti-bullying legislation

Research does not show that new laws help repair school yard relationships

May 24, 2012 (Ottawa) - Today the Institute of Marriage and Family Canada is pleased to release a new report: [*The limits of anti-bullying legislation: A cross-Canada assessment of what legislation can—and can't—do.*](#)

Legislation to combat bullying is currently being hotly debated in Ontario, with many other provinces promising to follow suit. Researcher Peter Jon Mitchell steps back from the political fray to examine whether bullying policies and legislation actually work across North America. The effectiveness of anti-bullying legislation remains unproven, with insufficient measures to evaluate behavioural outcomes in place. Existing policies, which currently run a price tag into the millions of taxpayer dollars, have not been adequately assessed.

“Politicians are falling all over themselves to introduce legislation without considering the basics of what they hope to achieve through the law,” says Mitchell. “It is reasonable to ask that more research be done specific to measurable outcomes before pushing forward with new legislation,” he adds.

Recommendations in the report include:

- Reviewing existing policies and funding commitments
- Prioritizing evaluation and research
- Minimizing the scope of legislation while maximizing community autonomy
- Communicating clear, pragmatic expectations of legislation

“There is no question that schools must respond to bullying,” says Mitchell. “However, laws cannot be a substitute for the community level involvement needed to address bullying. Effectively addressing bullying begins with families, parents, students and educators, not the legislature,” he concludes.

This report chronicles the position of Canadian provinces with regards to anti-bullying measures and legislation. A follow-up report will examine effective community-based solutions to the problem.

To download the full report, [click here](#).

To arrange an interview, please contact Peter Jon Mitchell, Senior Researcher at 613-565-3832, ext. 7503.