

Quebec's "Lola" case: The Institute of Marriage and Family Canada applauds the Supreme Court of Canada ruling

January 25, 2013 (Ottawa) – Today the Supreme Court of Canada has ruled that Quebec can exclude cohabiting couples from receiving spousal support in the event of relationship breakdown.

The Institute of Marriage and Family Canada applauds this decision because it accurately reflects the fact that social science research shows marriage to be substantively different from living common law.

“There is great consensus from social scientists, no matter their political stripe, that marriage is different from living together,” says IMFC Manager of Research Andrea Mrozek. “Unfortunately, the statistical reality is that people living together break up more readily – even if they do eventually wed. They are more likely to have multiple partners. Their children face more problems – higher rates of school dropout, more drug use and an earlier age of sexual initiation. And single parents – typically mothers – are more likely to be poor. These are some of the harsh statistical realities of living together versus getting married, and it is wise to acknowledge this difference,” says Mrozek.

Marriage protects against poverty and remains the most stable manner in which to raise children. Some researchers have even identified that a new class division is emerging along married versus unmarried lines. This is the message of author Kay Hymowitz’s book, *Marriage and Caste in America*.

Providing the same benefits to those living common-law and those who are married belies the research, sends the wrong signal about the importance of marriage for our culture and goes against the freedom to choose. People living together generally do so because they do not want to get married, and they should not be told after the fact that they actually are, simply because they lived together for a certain amount of time.

“As the saying goes, cohabitation is good preparation not for marriage, but for divorce. The Supreme Court of Canada decision today reflects the importance of establishing that marriage is a uniquely positive force for families in our culture,” concludes Mrozek.

For further comment, please call Andrea Mrozek at 613-875-5888.