

*For Immediate Release from the* **CHRISTIAN LEGAL FELLOWSHIP**

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### **B.C. HEARING ON CONSTITUTIONALITY OF POLYGAMY BEGINS MONDAY**

Vancouver, BC – Today, the Supreme Court of British Columbia will begin hearing opening statements in the *Constitutional Reference on Polygamy*. The *Reference*, brought by the Attorney General of British Columbia, asks the Court to determine if Parliament may prohibit polygamy and at the same time uphold the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*' guarantee of religious freedom.

Christian Legal Fellowship, an intervener in the *Reference*, will argue that Parliament may enact laws that protect women and children from the practice of polygamy while carefully preserving religious freedom.

"For the next few months, marriage and family will be on trial," said Ruth Ross, CLF Executive Director and General Legal Counsel. "The Supreme Court of British Columbia will hear strong arguments and examine evidence that proves polygamy harms women, children, and society and that outlawing it doesn't compromise religious freedom. The Court then has a choice between defending the primary building block of society – the institution of marriage – and forcing Canada to become the first Western nation to legalize a practice that disproportionately impacts the vulnerable of society."

Over the next week, the Court will hear opening statements by the Attorney General of Canada, the Attorney General of British Columbia, the Amicus, and eleven other interveners. The Court will then commence with evidence delivered in open court and testimony from experts and individuals possessing first-hand information about polygamy. After the evidence is presented, the parties will have an opportunity to make written and oral arguments to the Court. The process is expected to take until late-January.

"Christian Legal Fellowship will argue that the protection of the *Charter* guarantee of the right to life, liberty, and security of person is not in conflict with the *Charter* guarantee of freedom of religion," said Ross. "This *Reference* cuts to the core of our understanding of democracy and the rule of law."

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*The Christian Legal Fellowship is a national not-for-profit association of legal professionals in Canada. The association, among other functions, explores the complex interrelationships between the practice and theory of law and Christian faith. The Fellowship has some 500 active members from several dozen Christian denominations working together to integrate Christian faith with law.*