



# O'NEILL: Parents have primary rights kids' education

By [Terry O'Neill - The Tri-City News](#)

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## ***FACE TO FACE: Does court-ordered 'socialization' in Quebec case go too far?***

Of the countless buzzwords that flutter around the practice of child rearing, none currently surpasses “socialization” in its pervasiveness.

We are informed that infants should begin to experience the joys of early socialization in daycare; that toddlers should go to playschool to better socialize with their peers; that pre-schoolers must attend kindergarten in the name of socialization; and that children should enrol in school in the name of several goals, among which socialization is in the first rank.

What happened to the days when “Go out and play with the other kids” was all you needed to hear about the subject?

Sadly, those days are long gone. Nowhere was this more evident than when a judge ruled earlier this year that a family in Quebec must — yes, must! — send its two pre-school-age children to a daycare so that they can be socialized. Last year, the court also ordered that the family’s two older children must attend school for the same reason.

The parents were not abusing their children. They were not starving them, beating them, neglecting them, filling their minds with hateful propaganda, enslaving them or otherwise mistreating them. No. All they were attempting to do was to raise their brood by themselves, without any assistance from or interference by the state.

But in Quebec, this is now apparently against the law. The father, who is a traditional Catholic, describes the government’s attack on his family as a witch hunt. I agree and hope

the family's appeal to the Quebec Superior Court is successful.

In a surprise fit of reasonableness, my colleague on the other side of the page isn't quite ready to embrace the judge's ruling; nevertheless, he wants to celebrate the concept of "socialization" as one of the great accomplishments of the public-education industry in which he once laboured.

My view is this: The responsibility to shape young minds is an awesome one. By law and custom, parents and the state share this vital task, with their interests often intersecting in the classroom.

But each side must be careful to respect legitimate boundaries. Parents should not attempt to dictate lesson plans to teachers and the state should know that moms and dads, not bureaucrats and judges, have the primary right to raise — and socialize — their children.

*An award-winning journalist, a writer with Edmonton's Report Magazine and Toronto's Catholic Insight magazine, and co-host of RoadkillRadio.com, Face to Face columnist Terry O'Neill is a long-time Coquitlam resident who sits on the board of the Coquitlam Foundation and chairs the finance committee of St. Joseph's Catholic parish.*

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