

NOT JUST A FLUFFY TALE ABOUT THE EASTER BUNNY

The refusal by foster parents to lie about a mythical rabbit should not have meant the removal of children in their care

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Much of the media coverage of the legal decision involving Derek and Frances Baars and the Children's Aid Society of Hamilton has treated it as a quirky story about a Christian family versus the Easter Bunny and Santa Claus.

In fact, the 61-page decision by Justice A.J. Goodman is a blistering critique of the aid society's violation of charter rights in trying to force two Canadians to tell lies to kids in foster care.

His ruling cites evidence that the society's employees appear to have been motivated by an "underlying animus" and "stereotypical belief" about Christians. As

such, Goodman ruled, the breaches of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms were "unreasonable, arbitrary and discriminatory." That's a long way from some fluffy tale about the Easter Bunny and Jolly Old St. Nick being before the bar.

Vigilant truth is the lived commitment of the Baars, a deeply Protestant couple then living in Hamilton, Ont., who opened their home in December 2015 to foster sisters aged three and four. The couple will no more lie than break any other of the Ten Commandments. They are completely honest about that.

Six months previous, when they were undergoing training to become foster parents, they were up front that their faith prohibited them taking any deviation from the truth. So they would not tell children in their care that the



Easter Bunny or Santa Claus are real.

They were still happy to hide chocolate eggs for an Easter hunt, though they felt obliged to own up if necessary to the goodies being store-bought rather than spin a whopper about a wascally wabbit bringing them.

All this was fine until a Children's Aid Society of Hamilton place-

ment worker, Tracey Lindsay, began pressuring the Baars to be "culturally sensitive," ignore their religious convictions, and perpetuate myth-making at Christmas and Easter.

The placement worker's belief in her own infallibility was apparently such that she moved to have the two children taken from the home because of the Baars' refusal to lie. With a single day's notice in March 2016, without the kids even having time to gather their things, the society took the girls away.

Despite glowing reports about the care they'd provided, including thanks from the girls' mother for the wonderful Christmas the Baars gave her daughters, the foster home was shut down. The couple was effectively prevented from ever taking children into care again.

Goodman found this to be a serious violation of the Baars' charter rights to religious freedom and freedom of expression. He delivers a stinging rebuke to the idea that the state can use its awesome force to oblige citizens to disavow their beliefs, proclaim things they don't believe or speak when their preference is silence. "The purpose of the society's actions was to control the Baars' attempts to convey meaning, namely their attempts to convey their opinion and values with regard to lying. ... (T)he right to freedom of expression prohibits compelling anyone to express opinions not their own," Goodman writes.

Every politician and state agent should reread those words daily. They are particularly suited to the Canada Summer Jobs program debacle, where the federal gov-

ernment wants Canadians to just tick the box on a funding application form attesting that they support a non-existent right to abortion.

Such obligatory box requires, of course, ignoring one's true opinions and values regarding abortion. But failure to tick the box means no federal funds to hire summer students, just as refusing to affirm the reality of the non-existent Easter Bunny meant the Baars losing their foster children and their foster home.

As with the Baars, legal action is now proceeding over the Canada Summer Jobs perjury. We can only hope Goodman's decision serves a noble purpose in that process. More, moving beyond the specific story line before the courts, we can be infinitely grateful there are Canadians who simply won't lie down when the state tells them to lie.

Bomb Threat at Pickering Town Centre

An investigation is underway to identify the person responsible for phoning in a bomb threat at Pickering Town Centre yesterday.

On Thursday March 15, 2018, at approximately 4:50 a.m. police received an anonymous phone call from a man warning of the presence of a bomb at the Pickering Town Centre.

Officers attended the shopping mall and co-ordinated efforts with security to search for any explosive device. The mall was closed for several hours while the search took place. Multiple resources were deployed, including officers from West Division and a specially-trained K-9 team. No explosive device was found and the mall was later re-opened.

As part of the investigation, officers attended a residence nearby, but no arrests were made. Anyone with information as to the identity of the male who called in the bomb threat is asked to contact the DRPS or do so anonymously through Crime Stoppers.

Domestic Related Homicides in Ajax

Police are investigating a domestic-related double homicide in Ajax after two people were found deceased at a residence this morning and a third person was discovered with serious injuries. On Wednesday March 14, 2018, at approximately 11:00 a.m. police were called to a residence on Hilling Drive in Ajax after a female, who went to check on the wellbeing of her female friend, was met with a male at the residence. She was refused entry and the male left the area in a vehicle.

Officers arrived to discover the body of a 15-year-old male and the body of a 39-year-old female. Also discovered in the house was a seriously injured 13-year-old female, who was taken to a local hospital and later transferred to a Toronto trauma centre. She remains in serious condition with life-threatening injuries. All three victims are related. The area was searched extensively, but the male was not located.

Cory FENN, age 29 of Ajax is now charged with three counts of Second Degree Murder.

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