

Atheist Wins Case to Ban Bible Distribution in Canada Schools

Schools in a region of Canada have been forced to change their policies on distributing Gideon Bibles following a challenge by an atheist.

Rene Chouinard took his case to the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario after he complained about Bibles being handed out at his daughter's school.

Chouinard said it was biased for his primary-school-aged daughter to be offered religious literature, after he received a permission slip for her to be given a Bible.

Chouinard was then denied requests for atheist material to be distributed by the school.

David Wright, associate chair of the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario, found in his decision that allowing only the Gideons to distribute literature in Niagara schools was discriminatory.

He ruled that schools in the Niagara area could only hand out Gideon Bibles if they develop a new policy that would allow the distribution of atheist material.

Mr. Wright said that if the school board "is prepared to distribute permission forms proposing the distribution of Christian texts to committed atheists, it must also be prepared to distribute permission forms proposing the distribution of atheist texts to religious Christians."

He added, "It cannot design its criteria in a way that would permit communication of materials setting out their beliefs by some but not all creeds."

Mr. Chouinard said, when he was granted the hearing in the first instance, that he would like to see "religion completely removed from the classroom."

Gideons International has been distributing Bibles to students in Canadian public schools since 1936.