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LETTERS

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Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada

Draconian system

I commend Kathy Barkhouse (June 19 letter) and agree with her conclusion that families in Nova Scotia, especially the children, are poorly served by the justice system. Due to outdated, draconian laws concerning child custody and access, we must always have a "winner" and a "loser." Such an adversarial system cannot support peaceful family life. Our justice system seems to maintain the outdated notion that mothers alone are natural nurturers of children and that fathers are dispensable - except for their role as providers of cash.

Loving, nurturing and honest parenting knows no gender. Just ask the children who are denied fair, court-ordered access to their fathers. This disregard for court-ordered access occurs routinely with no consequences.

Many fathers share equally in parenting until divorce, when it seems to be assumed by our court system that the father becomes an infrequent visitor, at best, in his child's life. These fathers are routinely shut out of decision-making about their children, despite accepting responsibility to financially and emotionally support them. They have no say when mothers decide to move away with the children, or not facilitate court-ordered visits, or work to alienate children from fathers. When fathers try to resolve these issues in the justice system, there is often no result, except diminished finances.

We must insist that our justice system remain current so that it can adequately represent the reality of Nova Scotian families today. Both parents deserve the opportunity to responsibly parent their children. More important, children deserve the right to be parented responsibly by both parents.

Margaret Coady, East Lake Ainslie