

Feb 16, 1999

Mr. Trevor Pettit, M.P.P.
952 Concession St. Hamilton Ont.
L8V 1G2

Dear Mr. Pettit

FAILURE OF OUR FAMILY JUSTICE SYSTEM

I am a 16 year-old Canadian child of divorce. I am writing this letter to express how shocked and disgusted I am about our family justice system. In recent months I have become aware of what is happening to families in our courts. I find it shocking that children and families are being torn apart by our legal system supposedly in the name of "justice".

My mom and dad first separated when I was only five years old. They got back together again but separated finally when I was 13 years of age. I am very lucky in that neither of my parents interfered in my relationship with the other parent. Although I live with my mother, I always have the freedom to see my dad whenever I want. I can thank my parents for their understanding of how important both parents are to a child. I adore my mom and dad and I enjoy a meaningful relationship with both of them.

Presently, my mother is in a relationship with a non-custodial father who has a daughter eight years of age. I have come to know his daughter quite well. I am aware that this little girl loves her father and wants to see her father more but is prevented from doing so by the mother. The mother is making life a living hell for both the daughter and the father.

Recently the mother has cut back on the girl's access to her dad and in some cases has denied access in violation to a court order. This is clearly upsetting the daughter. There is no reason other than the mother's desire to keep the girl away from her father in an attempt to destroy their relationship. The mother is lying in an attempt to get the father into trouble. The mother has gone so far as to have the young girl restrained against her wishes by older siblings when her father comes to the door. She has been made a prisoner in her own home!

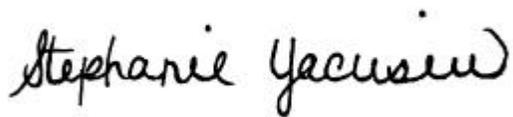
This young girl is being emotionally abused by the mother. I know what a child wants because I am a child of divorce myself. For the courts and the legal system to permit the mother to abuse this child is not right. Abuse of power by this vindictive custodial mother is destroying this child and making a mockery of our courts. Our courts are supposed to ensure justice not promote injustice and abuse of children.

Since my mother has been seeing this man, I have learned a lot about separation and divorce. I have learnt a lot about the actions of vindictive mothers and I am ashamed as a Canadian to say that these types of activities are permitted to happen in my country. This is not the kind of Canada that I want for myself or in the future, for my children. What kind of justice is this? How is it that the courts permit a vindictive parent to punish and deprive a child of love from the other parent. I'm only 16 years old but even I know this is not right.

I do know that children of divorce need both their parents. It should be a child's right in law. Our justice system should make it possible for parents to love their children, not allow one parent to kick the other parent out of the lives of their children. Vindictive parents should have custody taken away from them, not awarded to them as it seems to be the case now. A very simple solution to this mess is to give both parents custody and to ensure that the courts punish any parent who fails to parent cooperatively with the other parent. Vindictive parents must never be allowed to have sole custody of children.

I am ashamed of the abuse that the courts are perpetrating on Canadian children and their families. I ask you, as a member of Parliament, what do YOU propose to clean up this mess and to ensure that justice for children is restored to Canada's courts? **What we have now is not the kind of justice system I want to live under in the years to come!**

Yours truly

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephanie Yacusiw". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Stephanie Yacusiw
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