

# Counselling centre chided for giving space to gay group

By BRIAN WHITWHAM  
RECORD STAFF

## WATERLOO REGION

Social conservatives are again taking aim at the Catholic Family Counselling Centre, saying the agency going against the teachings of the church.

This summer, a local bishop urged Catholics to boycott the centre's upcoming visit from former U.S. president Bill Clinton, who angered some Catholics by supporting abortion and promoting condom use for AIDS prevention in Africa.

Now, Defend Traditional Marriage and Family, a local organization, has delivered an open letter to the centre on behalf of its Catholic members. The letter asks the centre to stop providing meeting space to a gay rights organization called tri-Pride.

Spokesperson Jack Fonseca said the coalition was shocked when it recently discovered that tri-Pride has been meeting at the centre for years.

"This group promotes homosexual marriage and so-called

**"It makes it look like  
it's not a big deal  
to Catholics and  
that's misleading."**

**JACK FONSECA**  
SPOKESPERSON,  
DEFEND TRADITIONAL  
MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

gay rights," Fonseca said. "We do hope the centre will consider its Catholic identity and think hard about whether they want to continue providing this kind of support for the gay agenda."

The letter explicitly asks the centre to "publicly and unequivocally renounce any past or future support of the homosexual agenda." It goes on to say that agenda is "a grave threat to family life in Canada."

The centre's executive director, Cathy Brothers, said she was surprised and saddened to receive the letter.

"I find it astonishing in this day and age to see that kind of rejection and judgment," she said. "But it doesn't challenge us."

**SEE CENTRE: PAGE B2**

# Centre: Inclusive agency

## CONTINUED FROM PAGE B1

Brothers said the centre is non-denominational and its mandate is to "help all people, regardless of religion or sexual orientation." She said the word Catholic is in the title to reflect the centre's heritage — it was founded by a priest in 1952.

"Essentially, we've been an inclusive agency and we remain that way," she said.

Fonseca said the centre has an identity crisis if it thinks it's non-denominational. He said an organization can't have the word "Catholic" in its title and then support a group such as tri-Pride.

"It makes it look like it's not a big deal to Catholics and that's misleading."

He said Defending Traditional Marriage and Family has hundreds of

Catholic members in the region who feel tri-Pride is radically against the teachings of the church.

Tri-Pride also has hundreds of members in Kitchener, Waterloo, Cambridge and the surrounding area. The group plans an annual weeklong festival at Victoria Park and its board meets at the Catholic Family Counselling Centre.

Board chair Dave Bell said he was frustrated by the note and he felt bad for the centre.

"This is a great organization," he said. "They do a lot of great things. I'm happy they want to support us."

Brothers said that's not going to change.

"We are firm in our mission to help everyone," she said. "We certainly know the path we're on."

*bwhitwham@therecord.com*