

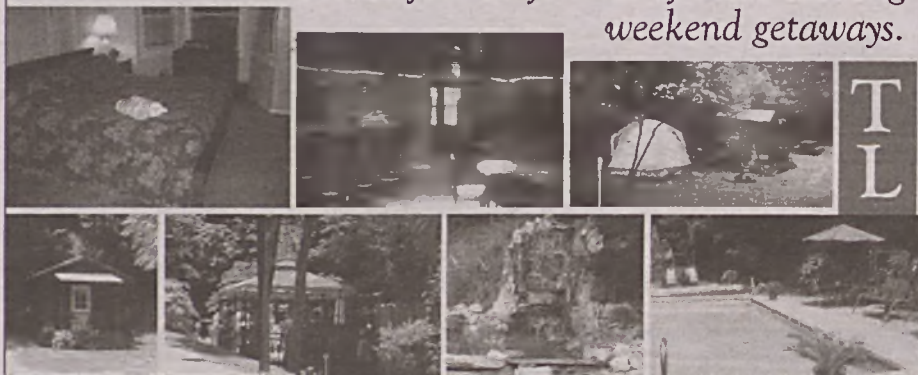


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International News Notes

Parliament supports school ban

VILNIUS, Lithuania — Parliament has voted in favor of a bill that would ban discussion of homosexuality and LGBT issues in public schools. The ban includes prohibitions against references to homosexuality in any public information that can be viewed by children. The bill is entitled, "Law on the Protection of Minors against the Detrimental Effect of Public Information."

Not yet passed fully into law, the amend-



Lithuanian activists marched in Baltic Pride on May 16, 2009. Lithuania has seen an increase in violence, discrimination and intimidation against LGBT people.

Photo Credit: Amnesty International

ment places homosexuality alongside portrayals of physical or psychological violence, the display of a dead or cruelly mutilated body of a person, and information that arouses fear or horror, or encourages self-mutilation or suicide, as information unsuitable for children.

"By voting to move forward with this bill, the Seimas has reinforced discrimination based on a person's sexual orientation," said Nicola Duckworth, Europe and Central Asia program director for Amnesty International.

"The amendment denies the right to freedom of expression and deprives students' access to the support and protection they may need. The Lithuanian parliament must respect everyone's full rights and reject this amendment when it comes to the final vote."

— by Matt Comer, Q-Notes staff

Controversial bill passed

EDMONTON, Canada — The Legislative Assembly of Alberta passed a controversial LGBT rights and parental choice bill at the end of May. Bill 44 officially protects the rights of LGBT people but also allows parents to pull their children from classrooms when lessons on human sexuality, religion and sexual orientation occur, *The Calgary Herald* reported.

Alberta Culture Minister Lindsay Blackett

said a "silent majority" supported the bill. The most controversial aspect of the bill was the parental choice section.

"For those people around the country that think that's somehow wrong, we in Alberta believe in family values, because the family's at the core of what makes a great community," Blackett said. "We're taking a lead, here."

Blackett said it took courage to pass such a bill. Other politicians scoffed at the idea.

"It takes courage to give our children an uneven educational experience," Edmonton-Clare representative Laurie Blakeman asked. "I takes courage to write crappy legislation where you take something that belongs in the School Act and ram it into human rights (legislation)? That's not courage."

Blakeman was among several liberal politicians who sought to have the parental opt-out options stricken from the bill.

Calgary-Buffalo representative Kent Hehr said the parental opt-out clause was a compromise, used to pass protections for LGBT people. "I think, at the end of the day, it was a dirty little trade," he told *The Herald*.

— M.C.

Priest to defy ban

BRISBANE, Australia — A Catholic priest says he will not be "bullied" by the Roman Catholic Church. He has vowed to continue holding services despite a church edict banning him from performing ecclesiastical duties anywhere in the world.

Archbishop of Brisbane John Bathersby imposed the ban on Father Peter Kennedy after the priest established a rival church when he was dismissed for allowing women to preach and for blessing same-sex couples. Kennedy says up to 1,500 people attend his St. Mary's in Exile services.

Kennedy says he will continue his quest.

"It's not so much me that I'm concerned about, it's the community," he told the Australian ABC News. "But the community will stand strong. I know that."

Under the archbishop's ban, Kennedy cannot say mass, officiate at weddings, preach or hear confessions. Kennedy says the ruling is "ruthless and vindictive." He says he'll ignore it.

"I will continue to celebrate liturgies and eucharist," he said. "Certainly it will make a difference about children wanting to be baptised, and certainly about weddings. I'll have to get a marriage celebrant's licence. But this man may be the Archbishop, but he has made, in the opinion of many of us, a very unjust decision."

— M.C.

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