Canada’s Supporting Families Initiative, by Emmanuel Witzman

In Canada, determining parental arrangements in divorce cases rests on the fundamental principle in family law that determines what is in the "best interests of the child." Divorcing couples can easily lose sight of this ethic, however, when discussing contentious topics such as spousal and child support in court litigation. In 2009, Canada began a five-year strategy created to help reduce the financial and emotional stress on families when parents separate or divorce. The Supporting Families Experiencing Separation and Divorce Initiative (SFI) encourages parents to resolve their disagreements outside of court. In this process, parents engage in designing flexible agreements that best serve the interests of their children, and with which they will comply on a lasting basis.

The Supporting Families Fund is a key component of the SFI. It provides government financial support for family justice services operated by the provinces and territories. The initiative trusts that parents understand their children and their long-term needs best. In order to help parents arrive at important decisions concerning their children, the Canadian government provides them with access to parent education, legal information, mediation services, and support recalculation services.

About the Author: Emmanuel Witzman practices law at the Vancouver firm of Chiu & Company (604-683-0318). Mr. Witzman graduated from Queen’s University Faculty of Law, and earned entry into the British Columbia Bar in 2010.