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Sexual health org awarded \$1.75M in damages after suing man who accused staff of grooming children

The court criticized the 'deeply damaging stereotype' linking 2SLGBTQIA+ community to pedophilia



BY [Jessica Mach](#) / 21 Aug 2025

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An Ontario court has awarded \$1.75M in damages to a nonprofit organization that provides treatment and support to individuals with HIV/AIDS and hepatitis C, ruling this week that a man who serially accused the organization and its employees of sexually grooming children had engaged in defamatory conduct.

The [court also granted](#) the organization's request for a permanent injunction against the



defendant, Peter Scott Blackwell. The injunction bans him from publishing further defamatory content about Canadian AIDS Treatment Information Exchange – or CATIE – and its employees and requires Blackwell to remove any defamatory content he has already published.

“The defendant perpetuated a baseless and deeply damaging stereotype linking members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community to pedophilia – a false association that has long been used to marginalize, criminalize, and dehumanize gay people,” the court said.

“This baseless stereotype has historically rationalized discrimination, and incited acts of hatred, harassment, and even physical violence,” the court added. “Use of the term ‘GROOMER’ in this context was plainly homophobic.”

Douglas Judson, a partner at Judson Howie LLP who represented the plaintiffs, told *Law Times* that a key takeaway from the court’s judgment is that “speech is free, but hate you have to pay for.”



Douglas Judson

“If you want to engage in this hateful, targeted libel of members of the [2SLGBTQIA+] community, civil liability will attach to it. And it could be very significant,” Judson adds.

According to CATIE and its employees, Blackwell began its online libel campaign against them in May 2023. Blackwell published posts on his website, www.cowards.ca, and its associated X and Facebook accounts, repeatedly accusing CATIE employees of sexually grooming children.

Blackwell’s website featured individualized profiles for each of the eight CATIE employees who are plaintiffs in the lawsuit. The profiles included defamatory statements but particularly targeted the organization’s director of communications.

The following month, Blackwell left two voicemails at CATIE’s office threatening to publish more defamatory material about the staff. The messages also stated that the staff belonged in jail, and referred to them as “fucking child-grooming pedophiles” and “dirty, dirty, rotten fucking child abusing pedophiles.”

The Ontario Superior Court Justice judge presiding over the case, Kerry Lee McVey, noted that she had listened to both voicemails and called them “vile, unhinged, and highly offensive.”



The plaintiffs sued Blackwell for defamation in February 2024. However, Blackwell never responded to the action and was noted in default this January.

McVey ruled that CATIE and its staff were entitled to a default judgment, writing that she was “fully satisfied” that the content Blackwell published was demeaning and defamatory. “This issue is self-evident and requires minimal further discussion,” the judge said.

She further wrote that Blackwell’s conduct warranted a substantial damages award, given that his posts reinforced harmful stereotypes and were published online, which meant they reached a wide audience.

“The internet is an amplifier: content can be copied, downloaded, screenshotted, archived, and redistributed within seconds, often without the original author’s knowledge,” McVey said. “Even if the original post is deleted, cached versions and third party websites may preserve it indefinitely.

“This permanence is compounded by the fact that once information catches public attention, the loss of control is almost instantaneous,” McVey added. “As a result, once something is ‘out there,’ it can live online forever in some form.”

In addition to general damages for the plaintiffs, McVey awarded aggravated damages “given the particularly oppressive, malicious, and harmful nature of the defendant’s conduct.”

The judge noted that Blackwell’s conduct undermined CATIE’s work supporting health workers and assisting vulnerable and at-risk populations. “By targeting CATIE’s staff and members of its volunteer board with defamatory accusations of pedophilia, the defendant risked deterring volunteer participation and impairing CATIE’s ability to attract and retain skilled personnel, thereby jeopardizing the organization’s operations,” McVey said.

Judson says McVey’s ruling “will stand as an important authority for other people who are involved in work with vulnerable communities and other members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community in particular, who are targeted with these depraved libels.”

He adds that the ruling “stands as a very strong example of the court condemning dishonest, malicious hate speech targeting vulnerable minority groups.”

In a statement on Wednesday, CATIE Executive Director Jody Jollimore said the ruling “sends a clear message that hate-fueled defamation – especially when it targets those working to improve public health – will not be tolerated.”

Blackwell could not be reached for comment.

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