

B.C. weighs charges against polygamists

by UPI

VICTORIA, British Columbia - The attorney general of British Columbia has appointed a special prosecutor to decide on possible criminal charges for the leaders of a polygamous community.

Bountiful, near the U.S. border, is a settlement of members of the Canadian branch of the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Warren Jeffs, leader of the U.S. group, is under indictment in the United States for arranging a marriage for a 14-year-old girl.

Attorney General Wally Oppal says legal experts have warned him that criminal charges might be unconstitutional, The Toronto Globe & Mail reported.

"The religious rights of a particular sect or a particular person will trump any right to prosecute," Oppal told reporters Wednesday. "In other words, there is a fundamental religious right for a person to engage in acts of polygamy. That's what's been suggested to us. I'm not so sure that's a correct legal position."

Winston Blackmore, head of the Canadian group, is said to have fathered 100 children by 20 wives. He told the Globe & Mail earlier this year he does not advocate marriage before the legal age.

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