

## Marriage is Special

- Family First believes that marriage is an important social good, associated with a wide range of positive outcomes for children and adults alike.
- Marriage is also an important public good, associated with a range of economic, health, educational, and safety benefits that help local, state, and federal governments serve the common good.
- Family First places a high value on marriage as the commitment which forms a foundation for the development of stable and nurturing families.
- We believe that marriage at its essence and by definition is between a man and a woman to the exclusion of others for life.
- Family First will oppose any legislation it considers will harm or diminish the institution of marriage and will support programs, activities and initiatives that seek to strengthen and promote the benefits to society and individuals of strong healthy marriages.
- Research indicates a wide range of benefits for individuals and society that flow from strong, healthy marriage. The following are some drawn from "Why Marriage Matters, Second Edition: 26 Conclusions from the Social Sciences":

### About Children

- Parental divorce reduces the likelihood that children will graduate from college, and achieve high-status jobs.
- Children who live with their own two married parents enjoy better physical health, on average, than children in other family forms. The health advantages of married homes remain even after taking into account socioeconomic status.
- Parental divorce approximately doubles the odds that adult children will end up divorced.

### About Men

- Married men earn between 10 and 40 percent more than single men with similar education and job histories.
- Married people, especially married men, have longer life expectancies than otherwise similar singles.
- Marriage increases the likelihood fathers will have good relationships with children. Sixty-five percent of young adults whose parents divorced had poor relationships with their fathers (compared to 29% from non-divorced families).

### About Women

- Divorce and unmarried childbearing significantly increases poverty rates of both mothers and children. Between one-fifth and one-third of divorcing women end up in poverty as a result of divorce.
- Married mothers have lower rates of depression than single or cohabiting mothers.
- Married women appear to have a lower risk of domestic violence than cohabiting or dating women. Even after controlling for race, age, and education, people who live together are still three times more likely to report violent arguments than married people.

#### About Society

- Adults who live together but do not marry—cohabitators—are more similar to singles than to married couples in terms of physical health and disability, emotional well-being and mental health, as well as assets and earnings. Their children more closely resemble the children of single people than the children of married people.
- Marriage appears to reduce the risk that children and adults will be either perpetrators or victims of crime. Single and divorced women are four to five times more likely to be victims of violent crime in any given year than married women. Boys raised in single-parent homes are about twice as likely (and boys raised in stepfamilies three times as likely) to have committed a crime that leads to incarceration by the time they reach their early thirties, even after controlling for factors such as race, mother's education, neighbourhood quality and cognitive ability.