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B.C. anti-abortion student group granted official club status after lawsuit threat

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A British Columbia university student union will recognize and fund an anti-abortion group that threatened to sue for discrimination against belief if it wasn't granted official club status.

At its meeting Wednesday night, the Kwantlen Student Association board granted full club status to *Protectores Vitae*, a group of Kwantlen Polytechnic University students who wanted to discuss "bio-ethics" issues around abortion — a reversal of its Nov. 9th decision to deny recognition because the group's philosophy conflicts with the student government's pro-choice position.

Oliver Capko of *Protectores Vitae* declined the KSA's offer to grant them "recognized group" status — an unfunded category given to political and religious groups at Kwantlen — because his group is neither of those things.

On the weekend, he decided to pursue legal action, but the Wednesday night decision will grind that to a halt.

"My reaction is definitely one of relief," Mr. Capko, a first-year agriculture student, said Thursday. "I've been working on it for the whole semester, to get this club going, so it's really nice to see that

it's actually coming to reality."

KSA board chair Christopher Girodat said the board wanted to avoid legal action and will revise its

pleased with the outcome.

"In the past few weeks, the Justice Centre has invested a lot of time in legal research and preparing the court documents, but we are happy that it will not be necessary to commence a court action against this discrimination," he said in a statement provided to the Post.

The student union's decision came about six days after the deadline Mr. Carpay gave them to grant *Protectores* group status or a lawsuit would follow.

Mr. Carpay had called the student union's original decision to deny *Protectores* status

a "textbook example" of censorship on the part of student unions across Canada — some of whom have denied club status to anti-abortion groups or have in other ways tried to limit their speech, according to the Justice Centre.

"It's a positive outcome, and the Justice Centre will continue to act for students at other universities if they encounter similar situations," Mr. Carpay said.

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Student Oliver Capko is pictured on the Kwantlen Campus in Langley, British Columbia on November 27, 2012. BEN NELMS for National Post

policies on how groups are categorized and funded henceforth.

"There really was no appetite to spend student fees on litigation over this issue," he said. "We'd indicated from the beginning that he was more than welcome to express his views on campus, and then unfortunately it looks like it came down to funding. The boards made the decision to grant them club status anyway."

While he looked forward to arguing the case in court, the president of the Justice Centre for Constitutional Freedoms John Carpay said he was