

Comment

Should be free vote

Cabinet members or not, each of the 307 elected members of Canada's 38th Parliament should be free to vote on same-sex marriage legislation according to their conscience — without fear of reprisals from Prime Minister Paul Martin.

Anything less is a slap in the face to the democratic process.

Numerous reports — including one from the staff at Burlington MP Paddy Torsney's constituency office — indicate that the prime minister expects members of his cabinet to toe the party line by supporting controversial Bill C-38.

While it might make sense, politically, to vote in favour of legislation put forth by one's own party, every MP also has a duty to those who elected them to office — and to their own beliefs.

It will be interesting to see if any of Martin's hand-picked cabinet members has the courage to break ranks in opposition to the legislation. To do so would most certainly be met with virtually immediate expulsion from cabinet and a corresponding reduction in pay — and

political power.

However, if a significant number of renegade cabinet ministers were to take a stand against the legislation it would certainly cause irreparable damage to Martin's already tenuous grip on the leadership of our country. It would also send a message that the prime minister hadn't done his homework when it came to choosing the men and women to help lead the country.

Meanwhile, cabinet ministers have been placed in an unenviable no-win situation.

Should they support the legislation, constituents who oppose same-sex marriage will hold them accountable in their eventual bid for re-election. If they oppose it, Martin will have their political heads.

Sadly, we suspect that most members of cabinet are willing to take their chances with an electorate that is divided on the issue rather than face the prime minister's wrath.

So much for free votes in Parliament. So much for democracy.



Our Readers Write

Gary Carr's decision on bill disappointing

Dear Editor:

I'm writing this letter to express my sincere disappointment in Halton MP Gary Carr's decision to vote 'No' to extending equal access to civil marriage to same-sex couples.

The reason I voted for Mr. Carr was because he represented the Liberal party. Knowing that this issue would be raised in Parliament, I especially wanted to help elect a Liberal government led by Paul Martin, as he would ensure that it was dealt with in a fair and just manner.

For the first time ever, we put a Liberal sign on our lawn, and my family assisted with Mr. Carr's campaign, as we were

truly concerned about the outcome of the election.

Imagine my dismay upon reading that Mr. Carr doesn't wish to uphold the values of equality and respect that all Canadians deserve. I'm a proud Canadian and often brag to my American relatives how tolerant our country is of its citizens, regardless of sexual orientation.

Mr. Carr's decision has truly broken my faith in his ability to demonstrate true leadership and courage in ensuring equal rights for all.

Lana Burchett
Hawthorne Crescent

Sanctity of marriage goes beyond procreation

Dear Editor:

David Cummings' letter in the February 15 Champion presented an interesting argument in opposition to same-sex marriage.

His main argument seemed to be that "fundamental to this heterosexual union is a family, the procreation of children."

Judging by this comment, one can only assume that he opposes same-sex marriage on the basis that homosexual couples can't procreate.

Going by his argument, we should immediately call our MPs to demand that anyone over the age of 40 be denied the right to marry, since they might be getting married for the wrong reasons — such as love, support and fringe benefits like financial security. Oh, the horror.

It has also come to my attention that there are many married couples

that are childless by choice. This is an outrage, and we must also write our MPs and demand that all these marriages be annulled unless they bear children immediately.

Mr. Cummings, how many children is enough — one, two, possibly three? A referendum is definitely in order for an issue of this importance. The majority must be given the chance to decide.

A dangerous trend has begun to emerge in Canada. The 2001 Canadian Census revealed that there are now many families without children.

In fact, to ensure that we continue to use marriage for its intended purpose, there should be a set timeline in which newlyweds have to reproduce. If they don't produce offspring in that time period, then society must move swiftly and efficiently to revoke their marriages.

I'm not against childless couples,

nor am I "hateful simply because I cherish traditional family values," but this problem needs to be addressed immediately.

I, like Mr. Cummings, can't support anything that "threatens to further weaken an institution so essential to our life and future."

Give me a break. I agree that marriage is a sacred institution and its purpose extends far beyond procreation.

Society has evolved considerably from the time when our founding fathers ruled the land. What would they think about our multicultural society and the role of women today?

Canada is a diverse nation that places value on equal rights — let's keep it that way. Every Canadian has the right to have their relationship respected and valued.

Shannon Morris
Barclay Circle

E-mail your letters to the editor to miltoned@haltonsearch.com.

Pud

by Steve Nease



The Canadian Champion

Box 248, 191 Main St. E.,
Milton, Ont. L9T 4N9

(905) 878-2341

Editorial Fax: 905-878-4943

Advertising Fax: 905-876-2364

Classified: 905-875-3300

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Ian Oliver Publisher
Neil Oliver Associate Publisher
Jill Davis Editor-in-Chief
Karen Smith Managing Editor
Wendy McNab Advertising Director
Tim Coles Production Manager
Charlene Hall Distribution Manager
Teri Casas Office Manager

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