



Gary's message

It's hard to believe that almost a year has passed since this new riding association formed, and that means it's time once again to elect the association's executive for 2005. Some great guest speakers lined up for the AGM on the second Thursday in March! See the other side for meeting details.

With a minority government, an election could be called at any time. To be ready, we've scheduled our nomination meeting for Thursday, 12 May (same location and start time as the AGM) .

Following the stunning quadrupling of our support in this riding in the last election, our membership numbers have been climbing steadily. This bodes well for our chances when the election is called.

The New Democrats have not taken widely differing and opposing positions on important issues like Kyoto, the war in Iraq, missile defence, and same sex marriage. We have stood firmly on these and other matters. When the election comes, and people see that they have a real choice, we will do even better than in 2004.

I'll be talking to you again soon to let you know of our exciting plans for the summer!

In a dither over equal marriage

One side effect of free speech is that all people can voice their opinions no matter how little they know about a subject. The equal marriages debate underscores this perfectly. Rarely do you see so much nonsense written by so many people on a single topic.

We read, for example, that marriage is a privilege, not a right. However, the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights states quite clearly that not only is marriage a right but it is available to everyone. In Canada, however, what is a privilege is the ability granted to religious officials to perform civil marriages. We also read that same-sex couples in Canada already have the same rights as married couples. This again is incorrect. In fact, they have only the rights afforded to common-law couples, under the same restrictions as those extended to other common-law couples.

No church required to marry couples deemed unsuitable

We read that equal marriages will force churches to marry people whom they object to. This, despite the fact that there has never been a single case of any religious organisation in Canada being forced to marry any couple. For example, Roman Catholic priests have never been required to marry divorced people. In Canada, freedom of religion exists and will continue to do so.

We read that same-sex

couples cannot produce children! I'm not sure if the people making those claims are unaware of modern medical technology or if they believe that childless marriages are somehow inferior to marriages with children. Either way, they are wrong.

We read that equal marriages will lead to the legalisation of polygamy and incest. For some religions, allowing polygamy is not an issue, but they would generally be appalled to see that right equally extended to allow a woman to have multiple husbands – polyandry – which would be required if polygamy were legalised! Moreover, no religion demands polygamy or incestuous marriages. People cannot claim their religious beliefs are violated, or that their right to marriage is infringed, because bigamy and incest are forbidden by Canada's criminal code.

Access, NOT definition, is changing

We read that the government is attempting to redefine marriage, as if the definition of marriage were a universal constant like gravity! The Canadian marriage of today is not the marriage of the 1950s. Nor is it the marriage of Saudi Arabia today. Bill C-38 will not change my marriage one bit, nor will it change any other heterosexual couple's marriage. It is not the definition of marriage that is changing, but access to marriage!



NOTICE

Annual General Meeting

Thursday, 10 March, 7:30 PM

see details on reverse

Surprisingly, some of the people most vocal in their opposition to equal marriages are those most vulnerable if the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms must be overturned to meet their demands. Mainstream religions in Canada, with the notable exception of the Roman Catholics – who don't accept Canadian divorce laws either – have generally been accepting of or at least tolerant of equal marriages. If Canada becomes a nation in which the religious beliefs of some people have greater weight than those of others, it will not be minority beliefs that are reflected in our laws!

Gay and lesbian marriage supported under charter

Most people's opposition to equal marriage seems to stem from their belief that homosexuality is inherently wrong. These people seem to feel that allowing same sex marriage sanctions homosexuality. In fact, the state has already granted this approval by including sexual orientation in Canada's various Human Rights Codes. In addition, the courts have confirmed this equality of approval by interpreting the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in a way that includes sexual orientation. Bill C-38, which the Commons is dealing with, simply acknowledges that the Charter is the most important law governing our rights.

As a party, the New Democrats have long supported equal rights for all Canadians. In fact, we ran as a party on the promise of supporting equal marriages. We were the only national party to take a stand on this important and timely matter. When the issue is debated in Parliament, it will receive solid support from the NDP and also from the Bloc Québécois. Commentators anticipate that the majority of the Conservatives will vote against it.

Dithering Liberals may need to call early election

Many will recall Paul Martin's appeal to Canada's NDP voters when he told them that New Democrats and Liberals share the same values. This was disproven a decade ago when the Ontario Liberals voted solidly against NDP legislation to extend

equal rights to homosexuals. Now Martin is finding his party's support for Bill C-38 so weak that he is resorting to pleading with his caucus to stay away rather than vote against it. Six of the seven Liberal MPs in Pickering and Scarborough have indicated they will vote against the bill.

Bill C-38 is only an example of Paul Martin's ineffectiveness in dealing with major issues. From missile defence to tsu-

nami relief, the CBC, national day care, affordable housing, and health care, this is a government that doesn't know where it's going and wouldn't know how to get there if it did!

There is no telling when the present government will be defeated, but most experts are predicting it will be sooner rather than later. When the election comes, we must be ready. Canada deserves better!

Pickering Scarborough-East Federal NDP Riding Association

Annual General Meeting

- election of officers
- preparation for the federal election

Thursday 10 March 2005, 7:30 PM

Port Union Community Centre

5450 Lawrence Avenue East

*(Lawrence Avenue, just west of Port Union,
a short walk from the Rouge Hill GO station)*

Members and non-members are welcome.
Light refreshments will be served.

Featured Speakers



Tarek Fatah is host of television's *Muslim Chronicle* as well as a founding member of the Muslim Canadian Congress and a Director of the international Progressive Muslim Union.



El-Farouk Khaki is an active member of *Salaam*, a politically active Muslim gay-rights organisation.

Both have been very visible in the fight against the introduction of Sharia into Ontario Family Law and taken strong positions in favour of equal marriage.