

Egale Canada

PRESS RELEASE

December 21, 2004 - for immediate release

## **COURT EXTENDS EQUAL MARRIAGE TO NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR**

87% of Canada's Population Now Has Equal Marriage

St. John's-Today Chief Justice Derek Green of the Supreme Court of Newfoundland and Labrador ordered that the definition of marriage in the province include same-sex couples. The case was brought by two same-sex couples: Jacqueline Pottle and Noelle Krista French, and Lisa Ellen Zigler and Theresa Marie Walsh.

"Marriage signifies societal recognition and affirmation of a relationship between two people who love each other and are committed to each other," said Theresa Walsh, who has been with her partner Lisa Zigler for 7 years. "I love Lisa and want to be with her for the rest of my life."

"I believe extending the right to legally marry to lesbians and gays is an issue of equality and human rights," said Lisa Zigler. "This is not an issue that should be subject to a popularity contest. Imagine if we suggested that someone's freedom of religion should be subject to a popularity contest. Canadians wouldn't stand for that."

"Now we can get married by Christmas," said Jacqueline Pottle, whose partner of 4 years is Noelle French. "It means so much for us to be able to marry right here in Newfoundland, rather than having to travel to another province."

"Now my parents will be able to come to our wedding," said Noelle French. "I can't tell you how happy that makes me. We're getting married this Thursday, right here in St. John's. We're so honoured that Mayor Wells will be performing our ceremony."

"As is now clear in Canadian law, the judge found that it is unconstitutional to exclude same-sex couples from civil marriage," said the couples' lawyer Sean Foreman. "This finding was supported by the ruling of the Supreme Court of Canada last week, who stated quite clearly that the Charter protects both equality rights and freedom of religion."

"Civil marriage is a public institution and should be open to all people, regardless of their sexual orientation," said Gemma Hickey of the Newfoundland chapter of Canadians for Equal Marriage, an umbrella group working for passage of the federal government's equal marriage legislation. "Equal marriage furthers

Canadian values like inclusion, mutual respect and freedom from political or social prejudice."

"87% of Canada's population now enjoys full marriage equality," said Laurie Arron, Director of Advocacy of Egale Canada, the national group advancing equality and justice for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons and their families. "Equal marriage diminishes no one. Canada is being strengthened by the inclusion of these loving, committed couples."

"We hope that very soon all Canadians will have the equal right to marry," said Cicely McWilliam of Canadians for Equal Marriage. "Parliament faces a choice. It can extend equal marriage to all Canadians or it can invoke the notwithstanding clause to take away Charter protection from lesbian and gay people. Invoking the notwithstanding clause would be unprecedented for Parliament, and would risk eroding Charter protection for all Canadians. Clearly, that would be out of step with Canadian values."

A survey released July 1 by the Centre for Research and Information on Canada and Environics Research found that the number of Canadians agreeing that gays and lesbians should be allowed to marry has increased 9%. Currently, 57% agree, the highest level since CRIC first asked the question two years ago. The number disagreeing currently stands at 38%.

(see New Canada survey at

[http://www.cric.ca/pdf\\_re/new\\_canada\\_redux/new\\_canada\\_redux\\_summary.pdf](http://www.cric.ca/pdf_re/new_canada_redux/new_canada_redux_summary.pdf)

- 30 -

For more info:

Jacqueline Pottle and Noelle French, 709-738-3618

Lisa Zigler and Theresa Walsh, 709-579-2517

Sean Foreman, Merrick Holm, 902-482-7020, [sforeman@merrickholm.com](mailto:sforeman@merrickholm.com)

Gemma Hickey, Canadians for Equal Marriage, Newfoundland chapter,  
709-690-5244 (c), 709-738-2650 (h), [gemmahickey@hotmail.com](mailto:gemmahickey@hotmail.com)

Cicely McWilliam, Canadians for Equal Marriage,  
416-928-1238, [cicely@equal-marriage.ca](mailto:cicely@equal-marriage.ca)

Laurie Arron, Egale Canada,  
416-928-1238 (o), 416-839-7178 (c), [laurie@egale.ca](mailto:laurie@egale.ca)

Gilles Marchildon, Egale Canada,  
613-230-1043 (o), 613-864-1133 (c), [gilles@egale.ca](mailto:gilles@egale.ca)

[egale-e@lists.egale.ca](mailto:egale-e@lists.egale.ca)

Your PSAC Ontario Council Representative  
for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual & Transgendered  
Members is JOHN ROSS  
Call (W) (519) 751-2584 (H) (905) 768-3756  
PO Box 325 Hagersville, ON N0A 1H0