

Hi John,

I hope things are going well for you. Things are much better for me now that we have a collective agreement.

I'm just dropping a note to let you know what this constituent thinks on the issue of same gender marriage and the Civil Marriage Act. I meant it to be a short note, but it got out of hand.

I come from a strongly religious family that has been in Canada for many generations. I have ancestors that came to North America as early as the early 1600's, if my cousin's genealogical research is to be believed. The most recent arrivals came in the third and fourth quarters of the nineteenth century.

Canada has grown a tradition of tolerance, and grown well as we developed that tradition. Our horizons of tolerance have grown over the years. In our earliest days there was discrimination on the basis of culture and religion, with conflict between the primarily French and Irish Roman Catholics, and the mostly British protestant groups. We learned to get along, and prospered. Other European groups were welcomed into Canada, and we continued to grow. A more recent turning point came from the liberal governments' immigration policies of the 60's and later, and we have further grown and prospered with policies that welcomed people to Canada from all over the world.

In today's Toronto, and especially in Scarborough, where we both live, we are hugely enriched by living in the most culturally diverse city in the world. We share the streets and our workplaces with people of all faiths, people from every ethnic group, people from all over the world.

The fundamental values expressed by recognizing and welcoming diversity have given us the great city and country we live in.

Some people are writing you to say that they fundamentally believe that to be gay is evil. Some will say that allowing "those people" to marry will tear apart the fabric of our society. I say they're full of crap.

Giving in to the attitude that some people are of less value, or are less deserving of the full protection and benefit of our laws is what will damage our country.

We welcome people of all cultures and religions. People who think to be gay is morally wrong are free to believe that, the freedom to believe as one chooses (or as our parents teach us) is protected. Personally I don't understand how people can at the same time benefit from our laws protecting rights, and yet argue against extending those protections to other identifiable groups.

My own religion teaches me that the highest good is to love God, and to love your neighbour as you love yourself. For me, as it applies to the issue at hand, this means that it is a moral and religious imperative for me to support equal access to marriage for people who are homosexuals.

I support equal access to marriage for myself, my children, people who are Moslem, Jewish, Hindu, Eastern Orthodox, and everyone else. Straight people got it by default. It's about time people who are homosexual got it too.

I think that writing a law that protects all people's right to marry, while at the same time allowing individual clergy to not marry people if it is morally offensive to them is a good balance between the groups' rights. I encourage you to do the right thing, and support the Civil Marriage Act.

Regards,

David M. Odell