



Rallies for Equal Marriage End Stephen Harper's Amendment to be Voted On April 12

by Kevin Flack

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On Saturday, April 09th, 2005, equal-marriage groups counter-protested groups seeking to enshrine marriage discrimination in this country. While thousands were on the opposition, it is important to remember many groups were bused in from the United States, including the Knights of Columbus.

The "March for Marriage" protest comes as Bill C-38 nears a vote-in-principle on April 19th -- however, the Bill will be killed on April 12th if Harper's amendment passes -- an amendment that calls for civil unions and maintains that marriage is between a man and a woman. Current MP standing for the legislation in Parliament appears to show 164 supportive, 139 opposed, and 2 remain undecided. The final number will likely climb to 165. With a 10+ vote lead against the opposition, it is more likely than not that Harper's amendment will in fact fail. If his amendment does pass, it will be because of too many supportive MPs who are absent and/or too many opposing MPs who are in attendance for the vote. For a bill to pass, the House requires only that the majority in *attendance* show up for the vote. Since every vote is so crucial in Bill C-38 due to amounting opposition, the Speaker (Peter Milliken) will vote if a tie results. In 2003, Milliken voted against an amendment to enshrine marriage discrimination and although publicly undecided, his history favours gay rights.

Although the "March for Marriage" put on by the Defend Marriage group might have some effects on MP's changing their mind, most MP's have gone public with their intention to vote against or in favour of the bill in the House. Therefore, what appeared to be a public outcry against the bill with a potentially damaging effect on C-38, is most likely not the case.

Harper's amendment will be voted on Tuesday, April 12th. Although a close vote is expected, even some of the most outspoken MP's in opposition of the bill believe the amendment will fail. "I'm concerned that the amendment will be defeated," said Liberal MP Pat O'Brien, who expects only 20-25 members of his caucus to show up and oppose the bill. Bill C-38 is expected to squeak through and continue on to a vote-in-principle the following Tuesday, at which point on almost certain approval, it will be sent to an already established special committee in place to study the bill. The bill would then enter third reading and would have its final vote in May or early June. The senate would follow much quicker with less seats, and it is fairly uncommon for the Senate to go against the House. There are only 14 Conservatives in the Senate. Current support for the bill in the Senate is 13 voting for, 12 opposed, and 73 unknown.

A recent Environics poll shows the country nearly evenly split on whether C-38 should become law. The same poll shows that only 6% of Canadians believe an election should be called on this issue.

A petition signed by over 160 religious leaders in favour of same-sex marriage will be tabled in the House of Commons on Monday. Same-Sex marriage is already legal in more than 80% of the nation from court rulings that the traditional 1 man - 1 woman definition is unconstitutional.

EQUAL MARRIAGE RALLY VIDEO: Equal Marriage Support Rally (Video)

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Resources:

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[Current support for C-38 in Parliament \(House + Senate\)](#)

Please visit other equal marriage websites:

[Canadians for Equal Marriage](#)

[Equal Marriage for Same-Sex Couples](#)

[Tracking down the vote for C-38](#)

[Ontario Young Liberals](#)

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