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Defense of Marriage

The Liberal government tabled legislation imposing same-sex marriage on February 1, 2005.

Conservative Party Leader Stephen Harper has been swift to fill the leadership vacuum left by the indecisiveness of Paul Martin and the governing Liberal Party.

Stephen Harper's proposals represent a reasonable and moderate compromise position.

The Liberals' legislation represents the extreme position on this issue.

A Conservative government, led by Stephen Harper, will:

- **provide clear recognition of the traditional definition of marriage**

- **provide substantive protections for religious institutions in the context of federal law**

We believe that religious institutions must be explicitly protected in areas such as charitable tax status.

We will provide substantive protections for religious institutions. By contrast, officials in Paul Martin's government, including the Liberal Deputy House Leader and Minister Responsible for Democratic Reform, Mauril Bélanger have said that public officials should be disciplined or fired for refusing to perform same-sex marriages.

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Excerpt from Rex Murphy's: Church, state, and the same-sex debate

Strippergate, the Gomery inquiry, the offshore equalization storm, and for today's feature, the same-sex marriage bill. The Prime Minister, while on his Asian tour, for a moment suggested it could be an election issue, and his Foreign Affairs Minister Pierre Pettigrew has not too kindly told those churches who oppose it that they've no business in the debate. The lecture didn't extend to those churches who support the move. I suppose it's being a member of the high political class which exalts Mr. Pettigrew into the position of determining who and which institutions may or may not comment on what his government is doing.

But the separation of church and state is not quite the beautiful invention he thinks it is, if indeed he thinks it means that churches are forestalled from commenting on or attempting to influence the course of debate on a subject they perceive as affecting the moral life of their parishioners. In fact, and this will startle Mr. Pettigrew, they have no choice but to speak. It is their churchly duty. If the churches were to start asserting the right to issue passports or, for example, changing the equalization formula, then Mr. Pettigrew would be on perfectly logical ground. Passports and equalization are Caesar's territory and he's right to hold on to it. But the churches and religious people have a stake in this debate. They are rightly concerned that the passage of same-sex marriage legislation may evolve into an insistence that they, the

churches, will be forced to perform same-sex ceremonies once marriage has been redefined.

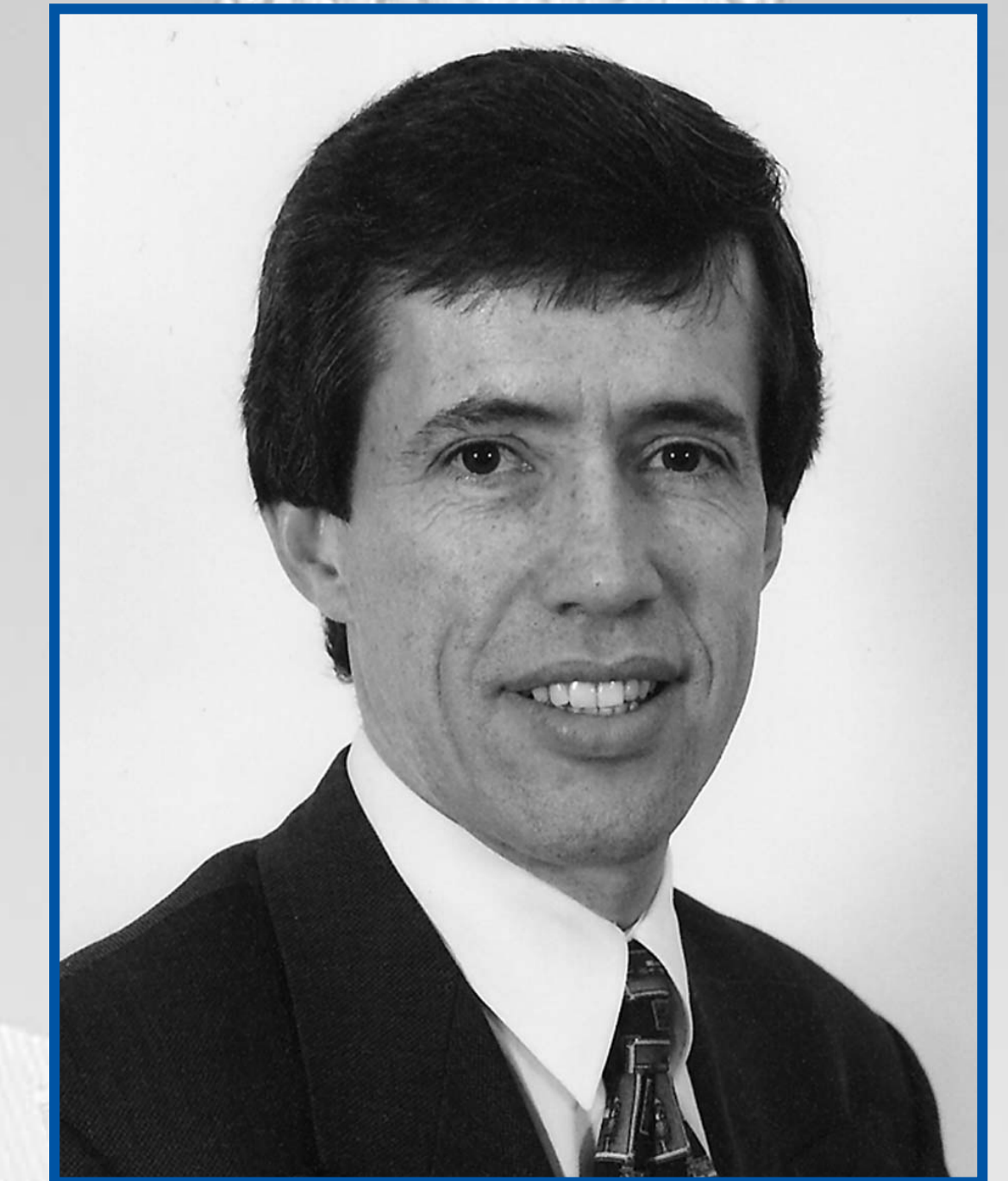
They take no comfort from the government's assurances that this will not be so, for it was the Liberal government's own Justice Minister in 1999, Anne McLellan, who during a debate on the very issue of marriage declared emphatically and unequivocally, I quote, "Let me state again for the record that the government has no intention of changing the definition of marriage or of legislating same-sex marriages." Minister McLellan was on a roll that day, for she went on, and I quote again "I support the motion for maintaining the clear legal definition of marriage in Canada as the union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others."

Five years later, this government today introduced legislation which revokes every syllable and even the spaces between the syllables of the Liberal Justice Minister's assurances. Today's legislation by the Martin government is not just an assertion of a new right. It is potentially the reduction of an older one. Religious liberties are as dear to Canadians as civil ones, and the minefield before the government now is the narrow path between them and as to where that path may lead. Well, as Ms. McLellan's words demonstrate so potently, government assurances on this topic just aren't enough. For The National, I'm Rex Murphy.

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Maurice VELLACOTT

Member of Parliament for
Saskatoon-Wanuskewin



Spring 2005
Special Edition on Marriage

Dear Constituent,

The Liberal government's agricultural producer assistance programs continue to fail farmers in Saskatchewan and across the country. The government has refused to make the kind of reforms urged by the Conservatives to make the programs more accessible and useful for farmers, especially in the face of the added hardships of the BSE crisis.

Most recently, the Conservative Party devoted their supply day debate, by which it controls the subject of debate for the day in the House of Commons, to challenging the government yet again to make the reforms farmers have been demanding, particularly to the CAIS (Canadian Agricultural Income Stabilization) program.

We particularly targeted the CAIS deposit requirement. Farmers contacting my MP office have condemned the CAIS deposit requirement. It's a policy that unfairly hurts farmers. We have to find a longer term solution. Members of our caucus have for some time been putting their minds to developing alternatives to this CAIS approach. What we propose is that a Conservative government would implement a whole farm production insurance program based on a 10 year average of value and production costs for a commodity. The program would be funded on a tripartite basis, one-third by the federal government, one-third by provincial governments and one-third by producers, and that a second level of support would exist, but would only be required in extraordinary circumstances such as BSE when normal markets and market access collapse. Our plan would include a bankable business risk program directed at primary producers and funded principally by the federal government. Unlike CAIS, this second level of support would not require producer cash on deposit.

Despite opposition from Agriculture Minister Andy Mitchell, and the Liberal government, the motion passed (158 to 114) with the unanimous support of the Conservatives, the Bloc and the NDP. The motion specifically called on "the government to immediately drop the CAIS deposit requirement and honour the commitments it has already made to Canadian producers."

This controversy is not going away until the Liberals do the right thing.

Maurice Vellacott

WHERE DO YOU DRAW THE LINE?

The Conservative Party of Canada position on marriage

The same-sex marriage issue is contentious. There is no doubt of that. Throughout the long debate on this issue, the Conservative Party has always been clear.

We believe this is a matter that must be decided by elected MPs who represent you, the constituents. We respect the supremacy of Parliament.

On the other hand, Paul Martin and the Liberals do not respect Parliament or the will of the electorate. The same-sex marriage reference was sent to the Supreme Court simply so the Liberals wouldn't have to face this issue during the 2004 election.

That's no way to lead a democracy.

For their part, the Supreme Court has refused to rule on whether the traditional definition of marriage violates the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. What this means is the court has sent the issue back to Parliament for the final say.

This is a clear victory for democracy and for the Conservative Party of Canada. The Court's decision shows

clearly what we have said all along:

Marriage legislation should be created through Parliament, not the courts.

Despite the Liberal government's repeated attempts to avoid having to face this issue, there is now no constitutional roadblock for the government, or any Member of Parliament, to put forth

legislation to enshrine the traditional definition of marriage and have it come to a free vote.

Conservative Leader Stephen Harper is committed to having a free vote on this important matter of public policy.

Why won't Paul Martin make the same commitment?

Prime Minister Paul Martin refuses to show leadership and commit the issue of same-sex marriage to a free vote in Parliament. He is requiring all of his Cabinet Ministers to vote for the government's legislation, regardless of their personal views.

Where do you draw the line? Shouldn't your government speak for you?

"In the past year, Mr. Martin has tried to hide behind the courts on the issue of marriage. The Supreme Court has refused to provide him cover. As I've always demanded, Parliament must now make this decision. I support the traditional definition of marriage, Mr. Martin doesn't. It's that simple. I will work to ensure that most of my Party can support my position, and I will allow all Conservatives a free vote. Does Mr. Martin have the courage to do the same?"

Stephen Harper, M.P., P.C.
Leader of the Opposition
Conservative Party of Canada
December 16, 2004

• What do YOU think? •

Please take a moment to share your views. When you are done, mail this section, postage free.

1

Do you support Stephen Harper's position to maintain the definition of marriage as the union of one man and one woman?

Yes No

2

Do you support creating civil union status?

Yes No

3

Do you believe this is an issue for Parliament to decide?

Yes No

4

Are Stephen Harper and the Conservatives on the right track?

Yes No

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