



For immediate release

YWCA Toronto Supports Same Sex Marriage

(February 16, 2005) As the second reading of Bill C-38 begins this week in the House of Commons, YWCA Toronto has “come out” in support of same sex marriage.

“Since our incorporation in 1873, family life has been transformed from one focused on the extended family to one defined more by the ‘nuclear’ family. The law has also come to recognize common-law relationships and provide for legal protection in the event of family breakdown. Women have been at the forefront of struggles for recognition of these realities,” says YWCA Toronto Executive Director, Heather McGregor. “A change in the understanding of marriage is part of a global phenomenon. No one can turn back the clock on these gains. Canada has a chance to be a leader in the world,” continues McGregor, “we urge the Members of Parliament to take up this leadership bravely.”

Fueled by concerns that secular democracy is being undermined by opponents to the Civil Marriage Act who want to decide themselves who is in and who is out of our Charter, YWCA Toronto’s Board of Directors voted unanimously in support of same sex marriage at their monthly Board Meeting on February 15, 2005.

“YWCA Toronto, sees the link between this issue and the rights of all equity seeking groups,” says YWCA Board President, Catherine Riggall. “Bill C-38 has been proposed with broad consultation and the consideration of The Supreme Court of Canada, and brings our legal practices in line with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. In 1981, YWCA Toronto backed the struggle to have the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms include the equality of women. The Charter must guarantee universal access to rights and freedoms. Selective equality is an oxymoron,” continues Riggall.

For over one hundred and thirty years, YWCA Toronto has been advocating for the rights of women and girls. YWCA has a history of advocacy work, with precedents that link the current struggle for same-sex marriage rights to other struggles for women’s rights and the broader aims of the Canadian women’s movement.

In December 2004, YWCA took a public stance against the inclusion of religious based arbitration in matters of family law on the basis that it confused a religious moral code with a secular system of legal protection.

The YWCA Toronto is the city's only multi-service organization by, for and about women and girls. We welcome women of all faiths, sexual orientations, races, cultural affiliations and creeds.

For more information contact Amanda Dale, Director of Advocacy & Communications, 416-961-8100, x350 or visit www.ywcatoronto.org.

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