

**Brief presented to the Legislative House of Commons Committee on Bill
C38
By the Canadian Psychological Association
June 2, 2005.**

Good evening. The Canadian Psychological Association (CPA) thanks, Chairperson Proulx and the honorable members of the Committee, for giving us the opportunity to present to you today on this important piece of legislation – BillC38.

I would like to preface my presentation to the committee by summarizing the history and nature of the involvement of the Canadian Psychological Association in the national debate on same-sex marriage.

As many of you may know, the CPA is the national, professional association of psychologists. There are approximately 14,000 psychologists in Canada whose science and practice activities concern themselves with the biological, social and psychological determinants of human behaviour.

In 1984 and then in 1996 (<http://www.cpa.ca/documents/policy.html>), the CPA issued two policy statements that bear directly on its stance in support of BillC38. The first, in 1984, prohibits the use of scientific information to promote discrimination and the second, in 1996, opposes discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

In the fall of 2003, the CPA issued a press release refuting claims about homosexual persons' fitness to parent, and the effects of homosexual unions on children, which had been made by individuals and groups opposed to same-sex marriage.

The CPA took a public position on the issue of same-sex marriage, and by extension, gay and lesbian parenting, because it is an issue, which we know something about. Homosexuality in and of itself is not a psychological problem or disorder and has not been considered so by the professional mental health community for 30 years.

Further, the available scientific evidence indicates that children of gay and lesbian parents do not differ significantly from the children of heterosexual parents with regard to psychosocial and gender development and identity. As has also been publicly cited by our colleagues of the American Psychological Association (<http://www.apa.org/monitor/nov04/action.html>), psychological research shows that

- gay men and lesbians value committed relationships,

- same-sex couples score comparably to heterosexual couples on measures of relationship quality,
- lesbian and gay parents are as likely as heterosexual parents to provide supportive and healthy environments for their children, and
- the development of sexual identity, personality and social relationships develops similarly in children of homosexual and heterosexual parents.

Although the sexual orientation of their parents does not result in psychological impairment in children, the stigma and isolation these families experience as the result of public and systemic prejudice and discrimination, may in fact cause distress.

Beliefs that gay and lesbian adults are not fit parents, or that the psychosocial development of the children of gay and lesbian parents is compromised, have no basis in science. Our position is based on a review representing approximately 50 empirical studies and at least another 50 articles and book chapters and does not rest on the results of any one study. These articles appear in such journals as *Developmental Psychology*, the *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, the *American Psychologist*, the *Marriage and Family Review*, the *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, and the journals of *Family Relations*, *Sex Roles*, and *Social Work*. An annotated bibliography on the topic can be found on the website of the American Psychological Association <http://www.apa.org/pi/parent.html>

In summary, the CPA publicly voices its support of same-sex marriage. This stance and support is based on our commitment to the fair and non-discriminatory treatment of persons in all spheres of society and to our opposition to the misuse of knowledge to justify discriminatory treatment of persons.

- There is no evidence in the psychological literature that gay and lesbian persons are less fit to parent than are heterosexual persons.
- There is no evidence in the psychological literature that the psychosocial and gender identity and development of children is compromised by the sexual orientation of their parents.

Once again, we thank you, honorable members of the Committee, for the opportunity to present to you today on this legislation of tremendous social importance and for your work and commitment to ensure the fair treatment of all Canadians under the law.