

Private Members' Business

of legislating a morality that is not supported by our Canadian principles, morals and values.

Canadians do not have to accept homosexuality as being natural and moral. Homosexuality is not natural. It is immoral and it is undermining the inherent rights and values of Canadian families and it must not and should not be condoned.

To endorse same sex marriages or to include the words sexual orientation in any federal legislation would allow homosexuals to obtain special legal status. It would allow them to redefine the family, to redefine marriage and enter into the realm of the sanctity of marriage, to adopt children, to enter into our schools and infiltrate the curriculum of our schools and to impose an alternative lifestyle on our youth. All these demands are encroaching on and undermining the inherent and inviolable rights of family.

Families have existed before the church and families have existed before the state. Parliament has absolutely no legal or constitutional authority to redefine family or to enter into the realm of sanctity of marriage. For Parliament to do so would encroach on the rights and responsibilities of family. It would also encroach on the rights of the church. I use the word church all inclusively.

Parliament must be reminded that separation of church and state has been respected for centuries. The state must not interfere in matters of church. However, the church has the right and responsibility to enter into and be concerned with matters of state. The power of church, and I use the word all inclusively, must not be underestimated. Over the last 25 years Parliament has gradually encroached on the rights of the church, the rights of family and the rights of life.

• (1750)

Over the last 25 years morality, an essential element in justice and legislation, has been gradually removed from our laws. Such examples are decriminalization of homosexuality, no fault divorce, facilitating and funding abortion and our Young Offenders Act. Now this motion before the House is requesting special legal status for homosexuals to allow them to redefine family, to undermine and erode and destroy the rights of family and to destroy the sanctity of marriage.

It is important for Parliament to be reminded that family is the basic institution of life. Life begins from the moment of conception and continues until natural death. In the words of the Supreme Court of Canada in Egan and Nesbit, marriage is heterosexual by nature.

[Translation]

Mrs. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to say to the members of this House that I fully support the motion by my colleague for Hochelaga—Maison-

neuve. As we know, this motion concerns legal recognition of same sex partners. In my opinion, we must remember, for the purposes of this debate, the limit my colleague wanted to set in his motion. We are not talking here about the right of same sex couples to marry or adopt. Debate on this matter, also a current issue, will take place later.

Today, we are trying to decide whether the Government of Canada should legally recognize couples of the same sex. I say it should. My support for the motion is based on certain observations, and I would like to present to you the conclusions I have drawn from them.

Individually, the members of a same sex couple enjoy the same rights as everyone else. This first point may seem rather obvious. However, I still think it should be made, because there is sometimes a tendency in some debates to assume that certain people are more equal than others. I am thinking here primarily of white heterosexual males.

Individuals who are homosexual are entitled to the same individual rights as everyone else and are also entitled to the same protection of these rights. Their constitutional rights, that is their basic freedoms, their democratic rights, their mobility rights, their legal rights, and their right to equality are guaranteed by the law and monitored by the courts. No government can set aside these rights with impunity. On the contrary, government has the obligation to ensure that everyone's rights are respected.

My second observation: homosexual couples are discriminated against.

Although homosexual individuals enjoy the same rights, individually and under the law, as their heterosexual neighbours, they become the subject of discrimination when in a relationship.

In fact, treatment accorded homosexual couples is completely opposite that given heterosexual couples. The courts have recognized this discrimination on many occasions, in cases involving the entitlement of members of homosexual couples to the benefits enjoyed by their heterosexual colleagues.

In Canada, several judges and arbitrators have had to analyze laws and collective agreements that did not recognize same sex spouses, thus denying these people the spousal rights and benefits provided under these statutory instruments. In several cases, after noting the existence of discrimination and its impact, the courts ordered employers to provide the same social benefits to both homosexual and heterosexual spouses.

Last week, the Supreme Court of Canada finally recognized sexual orientation as a prohibited ground of discrimination under the Canadian charter. However, on the issue of recognizing same sex spouses, the Supreme Court ruling clearly sends the ball back into Parliament's court. We can expect the conse-