

Private Members' Business

we going as a society? How are we going to determine what is best in this regard?

I would like to submit several ideas for the criteria we could use in determining what is best. One which is very important, and which I alluded to in my last intervention, is that we need to listen to Canadians. That is so important. As members of Parliament we are sent here to represent our constituents according to what they want us to do.

We are all aware that Canadians have been expressing their views on this issue. There is a continual stream of petitions on the subject. Why do people do these things? Why do they get into the mode of asking questions of people? "Here is an issue. Do you agree with it? If you agree will you sign the petition?" They think a decision is about to be made which is of considerable importance to them. They want to express their opinions and have them represented in the House. Consequently, we have had many petitions in which the members of Parliament, the House of Commons assembled, have been petitioned to not change any laws that would indicate approval of same sex relationships or homosexuality.

• (1735)

That may on the surface appear to be somewhat intolerant, but the question needs to be asked: Are we experiencing the tyranny of the majority? Does the majority feel this way? According to statistics and various surveys that have been taken, by far the majority of Canadians believes that heterosexual couples are the ideal models for marriage and for family.

We would err if we were to ignore the advice from Canadians when they say: "Hold it here, legislators. There is a danger. You are embarking on dangerous ground. Stop, do not do this".

There have been other very notable instances where the wishes of Canadians have not been taken into account. I suppose the best example is the infamous GST. If I am not mistaken, there were more petitions presented on the GST than on any issue when it was being debated. However, the legislators of the day chose to ignore that advice and we now have on the books and in practice the most hated tax that Canada has ever had. It is so hated that we all know what happened to the government that brought it in.

It is incredible that the present government got elected on, among other things, a promise to eliminate the GST. That is how strongly Canadians felt about it. Consequently the GST is one of the best examples of government ignoring the advice of Canadians. There are some consequences to us in this place if we ignore advice and put through legislation anyway.

That would be one of the arguments I would put in favour of my view and in my opposition to this motion. We need to learn to

increasingly trust and express the views of the Canadian people when they express themselves in this way.

Something else we ought to take into account is that this is not the tyranny of the majority. By saying we do not want to recognize same sex couples, we are not telling these people that it is justifiable to persecute them and to do other things that are not right to any member of our society. I would really emphasize that.

I grieve for anyone who is attacked, beaten up or assaulted. It does not matter to me whether that person is male or female, a native Canadian or an immigrant Canadian, or a Canadian who has been here for two or three generations. It also does not matter to me whether that person is a homosexual or a heterosexual. If that person is assaulted it is wrong. No Canadian should be deprived of the protection of law for such fundamental things as freedom of security and freedom of person. When we speak in opposition to this motion it is not because we are in any way condoning that type of activity.

In conclusion, I would like to say that it is my definite opinion and certainly the opinion of many who have communicated to me on this topic, that we need to promote, to the greatest extent possible, what we might label as the traditional family: the mother and father, the procreative couple, the family with children. Our taxation laws and laws on benefits should promote and encourage that kind of loving family relationship.

• (1740)

At the same time we say to these people who wish to engage in same sex relationships that there is presently nothing in the law preventing same sex relationships. Many of us disagree with it. It would be ill-advised of us as a Parliament and as a country to condone it, to approve it, to say that it is okay by voting in favour of a motion such as the one that we have before us.

With great respect for the member who brought forward this motion, I will not be able to support it.

Ms. Roseanne Skoke (Central Nova, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, from the outset I wish to advise the House that I do not support this motion.

This motion is specifically asking Parliament to encroach on a jurisdiction that is not within the domain of Parliament. This motion is asking Parliament to take the necessary measures for the legal recognition of same sex spouses.

In effect, Parliament is being asked to provide special legal status to homosexuals, thereby allowing them to redefine the family, to redefine marriage, to enter into the realm of sanctity of marriage, to allow homosexuals to adopt children, to enter into schools, education and infiltrate the curriculum within our school system and to impose an alternative lifestyle on our youth. This is unacceptable.