Let me finish by saying that I have never in my experience, inside or outside of this House, heard anyone call for active discrimination against individual homosexuals. No doubt some will build strawman arguments by suggesting that the opponents of the legal recognition of homosexual unions are in favour of this. That is pure nonsense and pure fear mongering. That is up to individuals. However, when someone who prefers living a certain lifestyle that demands of me as a citizen and a legislator that I codify government support for the union that lifestyle spawns, then they are asking for me to approve of, promote, and support that lifestyle. They are asking for my sanction on that union.

As someone who is dedicated to Canada and to the families of Canada, you can count me out. I will not support any measure in law that attempts to make homosexual unions and natural families equal. My constituents have spoken loud and clear. I, unlike some members of this House, including the justice minister, have been listening.

I encourage all Canadians from all over this country to start a campaign. I urge all Canadians, in the name of the preservation of our families, to let your MP, the justice minister, and the Prime Minister know how you feel about the preservation of the family. Stand up for what works in our country. Stand up for the family. Fight back with common sense against motions of this nature.

I urge all hon. colleagues to defeat this motion.

• (1815)

Mr. Tom Wappel (Scarborough West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to look at the exact wording of this motion. I have been listening to people going off on tangents talking about things that are absolutely irrelevant to the motion before the House today. The motion states:

> That, in the opinion of this House, the government should take the measures necessary for the legal recognition of same sex spouses.

There is no such thing in this country at the present time as a same sex spouse. Spouses are heterosexual. Spouses are husband and wife either legally married or common law. That is the legal fact in this country now. The words of the motion are simply incorrect to begin with. At best the motion should perhaps read: "That, in the opinion of this House the government should take the measures necessary for the legal recognition of same sex couples".

What the mover of the motion wants is that same sex couples be given legal recognition. How? By being called spouses. What does that mean? It means this motion is calling for this House to recognize two people of the same sex to be legally married. There is absolutely no other possible interpretation of this motion.

The motion calls for the legal recognition of same sex spouses. We cannot recognize same sex spouses legally unless we declare them spouses. The only way to declare them spouses is to marry them. There is absolutely no question at all about what this motion is calling upon Parliament to do. I do not care how they try to pretend it does not do this, the words themselves say it. They want this House to declare homosexual unions as legal marriages.

What do my constituents say about that proposition? It just so happens I have asked my constituents that very question. I want to read one of the questions I asked them. I will not read them all because I want to keep my comments relevant to the motion we are discussing, unlike some people who have spoken here. The question was: Do you want same sex marriages to be legally recognized as the equivalent of heterosexual marriages—pretty straightforward—including the right to sponsor same sex spouses or fiancés for immigration purposes? The answer was crystal clear: 84 per cent of my constituents said no; 13 per cent said yes; and 3 per cent were undecided. Eighty–four per cent.

In my respectful submission, there is no poll that could be taken anywhere in this country that would deviate from those numbers significantly. That is simply a fact. My constituents do not want homosexual unions to be recognized as marriages.

It has nothing to do with fear. It has nothing to do with hate. It has nothing to do with equality. It has nothing to do with homophobia. It has to do with promoting and giving advantage to that which promotes and gives advantage to society.

People have talked about inequality. I stand here as a white male. I admit it and I make no apologies for the fact I was born a male or that I was born a Caucasian. That is the way I am. The fact is that everyone in this country is equal under the law. The charter of rights and freedoms provides that everyone is equal under the law. There is not a criminal matter, there is nothing that I am entitled to as a matter of law that no one else is entitled to.

• (1820)

There is often a distinction made or a distinction tried to be played between a right and a benefit. A benefit is not a right. No matter how we call it, no matter how we try to disguise it, a benefit will never become a right. One is not entitled to it as a matter of right; one is entitled to it after meeting certain criteria.

The debate then has to be as to what kind of benefits we want to give to what kind of people. We can talk about that as much as we want but not under the rubric, at least not with logic, of this motion. This motion is not talking about benefits. This motion is not talking about equality. This motion is talking plainly and simply about asking this Parliament to legally recognize same sex unions as a marriage because there is no other way to legally recognize same sex spouses.