

GAZETTE
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Mounties drop ban on homosexuals

OTTAWA (CP) — Homosexuals will no longer be automatically barred from joining the Royal Canadian Mounted Police now that the federal government has taken a stand against such discrimination, Solicitor General Perrin Beatty said yesterday.

The Defence Department, which has also barred homosexuals, is moving more slowly by setting up a task force to decide how it will respond.

Although the RCMP has already changed its hiring practices, Beatty said homosexuals may still be rejected if they hide their sexual preference, thereby exposing themselves

to the possibility of blackmail. Beatty told reporters outside the House of Commons.

"But the issue would not be homosexuality or heterosexuality per se."

The force changed its informal policy after Justice Minister John Crosbie tabled a report proposing ways of bringing federal laws and practices into line with equality provisions in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The report said the government will take any steps necessary to bar discrimination on the ground of sexual orientation in areas of federal jurisdiction — such as the RCMP, banks and transportation and com-

munication companies.

Last year, RCMP Commissioner Robert Simmonds told a Commons committee he was not prepared to change RCMP policy, because "the aversion to it (homosexuality) within police ranks is extremely high."

Several Tory MPs are balking at giving homosexuals blanket protection against discrimination, and yesterday they were joined by Liberal John Nunziata, who insisted he was speaking as a private member.

Nunziata said he opposed homosexuals' teaching their way of life to students in school. He also said he would object to being searched by a homosexual Mountie.

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