

NATIONAL DEFENCE
INFORMATION SERVICES
PRESS INDEX SECTION
NATIONAL DEFENCE HEADQUARTERS



DÉFENSE NATIONALE
SERVICES D'INFORMATION
SECTION DU RECUEIL DE
COUPURES DE JOURNAUX
QUARTIER GÉNÉRAL DE LA DÉFENSE
NATIONALE

42-7

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Homosexual behavior not welcome in Canadian Forces, Beatty tells MPs

By Ron Lowman Toronto Star

The Canadian Forces policy of not employing homosexuals and lesbians will continue, but the obligation on men and women in uniform to report suspected homosexuality has been dropped.

Defence Minister Perrin Beatty made this clear yesterday when testifying in Ottawa before the House of Commons standing committee on human rights. He added that exclusions will be based on conduct and behavior, rather than sexual orientation alone.

This represents little change, since homosexual behavior was always the alarm trigger in the past.

Tabling the much-heralded final report of the forces' Charter Task Force, Beatty said his senior officers conclude that a change in the policy would seriously damage the operational effectiveness of the

forces.

The report says the principle of equality would appear to demand that heterosexuals and homosexuals be accorded privacy comparable to that provided for men and women.

"For these reasons, four separate sets of accommodation and hygiene facilities would appear to be a prerequisite for the employment of homosexuals in the Canadian Forces," the report said.

Beatty said: "The exceptional impact on personal privacy results in the presence of homosexuals being highly disruptive in armed forces. With the added tensions of war, this disruption would seriously detract from the operational effectiveness of military forces."

Legal counsel have assured the minister retention of the policy is sustainable as "a reasonable limitation" under Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

From the results of a survey, the report says, it is estimated that the Canadian Forces' homosexual population may be "up to 5 per cent" of the 84,520 regulars.

The task force report is an 81-page document that deals with the armed forces in society, women in combat, sexual orientation, mandatory retirement, common-law relationships and physical and medical employment standards.

The report, and Beatty's statements last week in Toronto and yesterday in Ottawa, are the culmination of the effects of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and a parliamentary committee on equality rights.

That committee said all trades and occupations should be open to women. The Progressive Conservative government replied last March that women would be able to compete for combat jobs.

② P Charter
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③ SO Charter
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