



National
Gay
Rights
Coalition

Coalition
Nationale pour les
Droits des
Homosexuels

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Our File - N-H R Act

5 October 1976

Hon. Ron Basford
Minister of Justice
House of Commons
OTTAWA, Ontario
K1A 0A6

Dear Mr. Basford:

I wrote to you on 30 August 1976 regarding the inclusion of 'sexual orientation' in the proposed Canadian Human Rights Act.

Subsequently, you announced that the new Act would be reintroduced early in the new session of Parliament. This has prompted a statement by an unidentified R.C.M.P. spokesperson to the effect that he hoped the R.C.M.P. would be exempted from any provision granting federal employees access to their personnel files since it would "impede normal investigations carried out on prospective officers (which) focus on 'character weaknesses' -- alcoholism, homosexuality, and traits such as extreme dependence on one's mother" (Globe and Mail, 5 October 1976, Page 1).

Mr. Basford, it is exactly because of attitudes such as this that it is imperative the Canadian Human Rights Act provide protection for Canada's gay minority against discrimination in employment.

It is absurd that we should still have to refute suggestions that homosexuality is a character weakness.

Yet the R.C.M.P persists in treating it as such.

If this is the attitude they take when recruiting officers into the force, can we expect their approach to be different when conducting security clearances on federal employees?

Of course not.

Many gay people in the public service are open about their homosexuality; it should not be a factor in their jobs and it usually is not a factor. They put in a day's work just like everyone else.

Others put in the same day's work, but hide the fact they are gay precisely because agencies like the R.C.M.P. persist in treating homosexuality as an

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illness or character disorder and can, in total secrecy, deny security clearances and, therefore, promotions and jobs to gay people.

As long as the R.C.M.P. maintains this attitude, gay people will continue to hide and even suppress their homosexuality. And many will continue to be discriminated against in their jobs.

The federal government must act now to prohibit job discrimination against employees of the public service (including the R.C.M.P.) and of companies under federal charter, on the basis of their sexual orientation.

This is a basic civil and human right which one of the largest minority groups in this country deserves and demands.

We cannot understand why a government which plans to introduce legislation to prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, creed, colour and sex will not agree to expand that list to include sexual orientation.

How many more statements like the one by the R.C.M.P. spokesperson do you need before you will accept that the discrimination does exist and that the fear of discrimination among gay people in the public service is widespread?

Does the government, or does it not, support basic civil rights for minority groups?

Does the government, or does it not, support basic civil rights for gay people?

Will the government, or will it not, demonstrate its support by including in its human rights legislation legal protection for Canada's gay minority?

Mr. Basford, my colleagues and I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss this further.

Yours sincerely,



David Garmaise
Coordinator

c.c. Francis Fox, Solicitor General

c.c. Anti-Discrimination Branch
Public Service Commission