

The Right Honourable Paul Martin, P.C., M.P.
Prime Minister of Canada
Langevin Bldg.
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A2

Dear Mr. Prime Minister:

The Roman and Eastern Catholic Bishops of Canada stand united in their opposition to legislation that would redefine marriage in such a way that it is no longer recognized as the unique, essential and fundamental relationship of a man and a woman.

The conjugal partnership of a man and a woman constitutes a unique good for society, providing a stable and positive environment for children and thus for future generations.

As the spiritual leaders of Canada's 13 million Catholics, together with millions of other Canadians of different faith traditions and of no religious affiliation, we call on the Government of Canada and all political parties to implement legislation that will recognize, protect and reaffirm the definition of marriage as the union of a man and a woman.

Mr. Prime Minister, we strongly urge you to ensure that all members of your party, including Cabinet ministers, have a free vote, in order to exercise their fundamental freedom of conscience and religion. Such a free vote would be in keeping with the recent decision by the Supreme Court of Canada which confirmed that the proposed redefinition of marriage is not to infringe on the freedom of conscience and religion. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, in its second article, clearly guarantees freedom of conscience and religion as well as freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression (art 2).

The current debate on the redefinition of marriage questions an institution that has a long history. It would not be prudent to attempt to rush through the process. It would be wiser to slow down the process in order to respect fully individual liberties.

Finally, Mr. Prime Minister, we urge you to repudiate the recent remarks as reported to have been made by the Honourable Mr. Pierre Pettigrew, Minister for Foreign Affairs, that Churches should not be part of the debate on proposals to redefine marriage.

Sincerely,

+ Most Reverend Brendan M. O'Brien
Archbishop of St. John's
President of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops

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For More Information Contact:

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