



MEDIA RELEASE

Valentine's Day Event on the Canal for Same-Sex Marriages Ottawa/Gatineau Chapter of Canadians for Equal Marriage to Host Celebration

Ottawa, February 13, 2004: In the spirit of celebration and romance, the Ottawa/Gatineau Chapter of Canadians for Equal Marriage will honour married same-sex couples from the area on Valentine's Day. A skating party will take place on the Rideau Canal **on Saturday, February 14, 2004**.

"This day will be an acknowledgement of how far Canada has come with respect to embracing same-sex marriage," says Chris Khng of the Ottawa/Gatineau chapter of Canadians for Equal Marriage. "While challenges on the issue still lie ahead, in terms of the Supreme Court Reference and having legislation adopted by Parliament, the predominant mood will be celebratory."

Couples will be led by several skaters bearing the multi-coloured Rainbow Flags adopted by the lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans-identified community. Starting at the Fifth Avenue gateway to the Canal, celebrants and honoured couples will make their way to the Dow's Lake Gateway, where they will form a "Wedding Ring" before participants celebrate them and honour them for their commitment to their same-sex partners.

"During the past eight months, thousands of same-sex couples have been civilly married in Ontario and British-Columbia, including me and my partner Heather," says Lisa Lachance, one of the national co-chairs of Canadians for Equal Marriage. "We believe that true love does not discriminate. This Valentine's Day celebration will be an opportunity to give Cupid a hand in the hopes that his arrows of justice and equality will find their way to the hearts of Members of Parliament."

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For more information: Gilles Marchildon, (613) 864-1133

Couples available to share their stories will include: Gianluca and Dan (married June 14, 2003 in Ottawa - Valentine's is their 8th month anniversary!); Laura and Léah (July 13, 2003 at the Beantown Ranch); Pierre and Jean-Yves (married December 8, 2003 in Metcalfe); Lisa and Heather (married June 11, 2003 at the First Unitarian Universalist Church in Ottawa). The **sequence of events** is as follows:

2:00 p.m. Skaters (flag-bearers, couples, and supporters) meet at the Fifth Avenue gateway entrance to the Canal (look for the Pride Flags); group of organizers will be at Dow's Lake to welcome "Flag Skaters."

2:15 p.m. Skaters with rainbow flags will lead the group and skate to Dow's Lake

2:35 p.m. The group will arrive at Dow's Lake, where the line of Flag Skaters will circle the couples and form a "Wedding Ring" -- on ice!

2:40 p.m. Welcoming address by Gilles Marchildon, Executive Director of Egale Canada and Gillian Wallace from St. John's Anglican Church.

2:45 p.m. Couples kiss and sweet gifts will be handed out to them in recognition of their marriages. Event concludes.