

# EQUALITY ACTION KIT

together **we can**  
**protect equality** **NOW**

It is time to **focus on the family.**



[www.bcfamilylawresource.com](http://www.bcfamilylawresource.com)

Just to be absolutely clear, this Equality Action Kit is a satire on Focus on the Family Canada's Marriage Action Kit (note the religious references). Nevertheless, the kit does have some helpful ideas and a nifty petition to circulate. **Please feel free to copy and distribute this kit.**

January 2005

Dear Equality friend,

Many of you have asked, "Can equality be saved?" The answer is YES. In fact, we have an incredible opportunity to protect equality right now.

The Supreme Court of Canada has said that Parliament *has the legislative power* to change the definition of marriage. But it does not *require* marriage be changed. In fact, by refusing to comment on that, it has been left for Parliament to decide whether a change to the definition of marriage is needed or whether the decisions of the courts of eight provinces and territories should be allowed to stand. As the government has decided to put forward a bill that would have the effect of creating a legislated definition of marriage, it is a matter for our democratically elected representatives to decide.

This is good news for supporters of equality because this is the first time everyday Canadians like you and I can be a part of the process. Your local Member of Parliament is your voice in Ottawa and your entranceway to protecting equality.

And we're not alone. Polls continually show that almost a majority of Canadians favour expanding the definition of marriage to include same-sex couples. In some provinces a majority favour expanding the definition.

The Parliamentary debate on marriage offers all Canadians a chance to exercise their democratic rights and step forward on behalf of equality. For some people, this may mean stepping out of your comfort zone into what seems like an intimidating political arena. Please be reassured that millions of Canadians are joining with you as we rally around equality.

Your involvement is simple:

**1) Call, write, email, fax, and visit** your Member of Parliament and request that he/she support equality. Do the same for the federal Minister of Justice and Prime Minister. You get to exercise your democratic rights!

**2) Rally those around you to support equality.** You can do this by writing a letter to the editor of your local paper supporting equality, or by holding an "Equality Awareness Evening". Check out the inside of this kit for more ideas.

**3) Most importantly, PRAY.**

Equality matters - both to us and the generations to come. Together we can protect equality now. Thank you for joining with us and millions of Canadians across the country,

Sincerely,

JP Boyd

JP Boyd  
Author  
www.bcfamilylawresource.com

This **Equality Action Kit** will help you move forward in protecting marriage. Enclosed in this folder you will find:

**Sample letters for you to use** – A letter ready to send to your Member of Parliament. You can just photocopy the sample we have provided, give it to everyone you can and ask them to fill in the name of their local MP, sign their name at the bottom, include their contact information and it's ready to go! No postage necessary to send it to the House of Commons, Ottawa, ON, K1A 0A6.

If you're not sure who your MP is, call 1-800-O CANADA to ask.

Elected officials have a duty to represent their constituents. Take up the opportunity to have your opinion heard by an MP who has a vote in Parliament, unlike the other MPs. It is your 'in' to the democratic process.

You can also write a letter to your local newspaper in support of marriage. When it is published, photocopy and send it to every MP in Ottawa - postage is free! You can use the sample letter we have provided, or visit [www.bcfamilylawresource.com](http://www.bcfamilylawresource.com) where you will find many more reasons to support equality.

As we know, media has a very powerful influence in our culture and it's vital that the importance of equality is presented there.

**Contact information for MPs, the Prime Minister and Federal Justice Minister** – Send a letter, email, fax, and call to ask them to defend equality by expanding the traditional definition of marriage. Remember, sending mail to Parliament is *free* so you can write more than once.

**Church, Synagogue, Mosque, Temple bulletin insert** – Help your congregation with information and action ideas to support equality.

**Equality petition** – Ready for signatures and addresses. Pass it around and send it to your local Member of Parliament. Includes information about how the petition process works.

**A complimentary *Equality in Jeopardy* brochure** – Q & As about regularly brought up issues in the equality debate.

**News article from [www.bcfamilylawresource.com](http://www.bcfamilylawresource.com)** – Summarizes the December 9 Supreme Court of Canada opinion on equality.

**Resources & where to go for help** – Read our information-packed *Same-Sex Couples* section written from an unbiased perspective. Plus find out about more material and case authority that will support you in the protection of equality.

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Province \_\_\_\_\_

Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_, MP  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, ON  
K1A 0A6

Dear \_\_\_\_\_, MP

I would like to express my views that equality should be protected and the definition of marriage should be expanded to “the union of two people to the exclusion of all others”.

Equality is of critical importance to our society. It is perhaps the most important societal value that we have because it provides for the upbringing of children in an environment of equality and tolerance and is a foundation for strong, healthy families. Same-sex marriage ensures children have the best chance to have two parents in their lives. Same-sex marriage also ensures the continuation of society and provides equality for future generations. Marriage between two persons is a unique relationship that simply cannot be replicated by any other relationship.

I am writing to respectfully request that you do everything possible to ensure that equality is upheld. I look forward to your response and actions on behalf of equality.

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_

## HOW TO WRITE A LETTER TO AN EDITOR

Newspapers get many more letters than they can possibly squeeze onto their editorial pages, so yours will have to stand out if it's ever going to make it to the eyes of your neighbours.

Points to keep in mind to help get you published:

**Play by the rules.** The number one reason letter-writers get rejected is because they think the paper's rules somehow don't apply to them. Make sure you sign your letter and include your phone number, don't send the text as an email attachment.

**Think local.** You will catch an editor's eye if you take a national topic and cast a local light on it. Talk about how equality is important to your city or your community. Tell a personal story, if you can. The closer you can bring home the issue, the less abstract your argument.

**Show, don't tell.** Forget introductions like, "I am writing this letter to comment on the proposed legislation for same-sex marriage." That's telling them why you're writing, and your job is to show them: "Equality is an essential foundation for our society." That kind of straightforward statement keeps even those who disagree with you sticking around for a few more sentences, if only to see how you prove your point.

**Remember the facts.** Remember, you're not writing for fellow believers who know Scripture truths, like do unto others as you would have them do unto you, but for people who don't necessarily believe the Bible, Quran or Torah is the inerrant word of God. So rather than simply sermonizing, offer statistical or anecdotal evidence that supports your opinion.

**Speak the truth in love.** This may seem like a no-brainer, until you read some of the letters from self-described Christians that turn up every day in newspapers all across the country. They nail the letter of God's love perfectly, but miss the measure of His mercy by a kilometer. The focus of a letter to the editor that affirms Scriptural truth should be to change hearts, not to mock or condemn the small-minded and intolerant.

So, get to it. Your neighbours are waiting.

*Adapted from an article written by Gary Schneeberger, "Letter Rip" Citizen, April 2001  
as reprinted in Marriage Action Kit, Focus on the Family Canada, January 2005*

## **SAMPLE LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

### **RE: Why we should care about same-sex marriage?**

Dear Editor,

Many people are wondering how redefining marriage affects them and why they should care. It makes it seem as if a marriage between two people of the same sex would be a private affair that no one else would need to know about. But the very nature of marriage is public. It is a union that is made before witnesses and documented by the government.

The purpose of marriage is not to stay behind closed doors in the closet, but to step out into the public arena. What happens in a marriage either builds up a community or breaks it down. Public unions necessarily affect many other connecting relationships. This is why same-sex marriage does affect my family, your community, and our community.

I encourage you to support equality and same-sex marriage, which serves to promote future generations that will uphold equality and tolerance as key Canadian social values. Support communities, families, and kids. This isn't about individuals – it's about all of us.

Sincerely,

Doug Smith

### **RE: How same-sex marriage affects children**

Dear Editor,

In the debate about equality there seems to be a lot of talk about what is good for adults but little concern about children. Marriage is dumbed-down to a warm and fuzzy relationship that makes adults feel good about themselves, at least those who haven't gotten divorced. It's all about the right to validate a romantic relationship. But what about the children who are being denied their rights to grow up with two parents?

A loving and compassionate society would not purposely deny a child of its mother or father. When a friend tells you they have lost their mom or dad, aren't your first words, "I'm sorry"? Why are we as a society not sorry about possibly mandating generations of children to be without two parents? Same-sex adoption is legal in British Columbia, but not in all other provinces, and assisted reproduction techniques are expensive and uncertain. If a child lost a parent, a concerned community would step in and offer support in their time of need. So too, must we step in for the generations of children to come and ensure each child's right to two parents is fulfilled.

Redefining marriage is a social experiment that risks much – the tolerance and open-mindedness of our children.

Sincerely,

Samantha Brown.

**RE: Same-sex marriage and religious freedom**

Dear Editor,

I'm happy to hear that the rights of clergy are protected by the courts. It is important that religious officials have the freedom to fully exercise the views of their faith.

However, I am concerned about the religious freedoms, and more importantly, the freedom of expression, of other Canadians - the millions of us who are not pastors or rabbis or clerics. Neither the federal government nor the courts have offered any protection to the religious freedoms, nor the freedom of expression of this faith, of ordinary Canadians. In fact, in the 2001 *Trinity Western v. BC College of Teachers* the Supreme Court of Canada noted that "The freedom to hold beliefs is broader than the freedom to act on them".

I can't help but wonder how this will be interpreted in a Canada where marriage has been redefined to include 'any two persons'. Will this mean I can hold my religious beliefs about the importance of equality but not express that belief in the public square?

In Canada, we are treading a precarious line of allowing ministers to proclaim the values of their faith, but not giving the same permission to the people who they are ministering to.

The same-sex marriage debate has repercussions that have rippled out beyond the context of equality. It has made many religious Canadians vulnerable to concepts of tolerance and open-mindedness as a result. Equality needs to be protected in order to ensure that other values found in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms – such as religious freedom and freedom of expression are secured as well.

Sincerely,

Bill Johnson

## **CONTACT INFORMATION for MPs, the Prime Minister & Federal Justice Minister**

Our elected officials represent us as constituents. It is important that we let them know our opinions, so they can best represent us in Parliament. Phone, fax, email, and write a letter to your MP, the Prime Minister, and the Justice Minister. Remember, if you are sending mail to Parliament - it's free.

If you're not sure who your MP is or would like other MP contact information, call 1-800-O CANADA.

The Right Honourable Paul Martin  
Prime Minister of Canada  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, ON  
K1A 0A6  
Tel: 613-992-4211  
Fax: 613-941-6900  
martin.p@parl.gc.ca

The Honourable Irwin Cotler  
Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, ON  
K1A 0H6  
Tel: 613-995-0121  
Fax: 613-992-6762  
cotler.i@parl.gc.ca

# PROTECT EQUALITY

can equality be saved?

yes

We have an incredible opportunity to protect equality right now. The Supreme Court of Canada's decision in December 2004 agreed that a definition of marriage that included same-sex couples upholds the Charter's equality guarantee, and Parliament is debating a bill to introduce a legislated definition of marriage which will include same-sex couples now.

This is good news for supporters of equality because all Canadians can take part in protecting equality. Your local Member of Parliament is your voice in the House of Commons.

And there's more good news! We're not alone. Polls continue to show that almost a majority of Canadians, a majority in some provinces, support a definition of marriage as "the union of two people."

what can I do for equality?

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**Call, write, email, and fax** the Justice Minister, Prime Minister and your local MP to request that they do everything possible to protect equality. Address it to your MP, House of Commons, Ottawa, ON – the postage is free.

**Schedule a meeting** at your local MP's office. Take your spouse, friends or neighbours with you so it is clear that you represent a community of opinion and not just your own.

**Write a letter** to your local paper in support of equality.

**Organize a prayer network.** Joint other believers in prayer for equality.

**Host an equality awareness meeting.** Invite your community to hear about the importance of equality.

**Stay informed.** Check out [www.bcfamilylawresource.com](http://www.bcfamilylawresource.com) for updates.

**Encourage** as many other people as possible to get involved.

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## HOW TO CARRY OUT A PETITION CAMPAIGN

A petition is a powerful way to make the opinions and wishes of the general population known to Canada's legislators. By following the simple steps below, you can maximize the effectiveness of the equality petition.

1. Start by making photocopies of the enclosed blank petition – you may need extra pages. Doublesiding is not necessary.
2. Circulate the petition as widely as possible: to family, friends, church, community, and local stores. Ask your pastor, priest, imam or rabbi if you can have a minute during the service to announce the campaign and the petition.
3. Gather at least 25 original signatures and addresses per petition – the minimum number required to make it valid. Full addresses are not required, but city and province are. Any Canadian citizen is entitled to sign.
4. Submit the completed, original petition to your federal Member of Parliament. If you can, hand deliver it to your MP at his or her constituency office (usually on weekends). This will allow you to express your concerns directly - democracy in action!

Petitions can also be mailed, postage-free, to your MP at:

Your MP's Name  
House of Commons  
Parliament Buildings  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6

Be sure to include a short cover letter indicating why you have submitted the petition, and asking that you be contacted to be informed of your MP's planned course of action. Please do not write on the petition itself!

If you do not know the name of your MP, call Reference Canada at 1-800-667-3355 to find out.  
Or, submit your petition to [www.bcfamilylawresource.com](http://www.bcfamilylawresource.com). We will gladly forward it on your behalf.

[jpboyd@bcfamilylawresource.com](mailto:jpboyd@bcfamilylawresource.com)

5. Remember: you can only **sign** one petition, but you can submit as many as you want. Nothing is stopping you from continuing to gather signatures. Now is the time to rally your community in defence of marriage!

