

## Conservative MP ripped for saying gays can marry - just not each other

**Bruce Cheadle**  
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OTTAWA (CP) - Conservative MP Jason Kenney says gays have every right to marry whoever they want - as long as it isn't someone of the same sex.

The Calgary MP made the remarks during a sometimes heated 40-minute discussion with members of the Toronto-area Punjabi language media, a recording of which was made available to The Canadian Press.

"The fact is that homosexuals aren't barred from marrying under Canadian law," Kenney said at the meeting of the Punjabi Press Club last month in Brampton, Ont. The group represents more than a dozen Punjabi-language newspapers.

Former NDP MP Svend Robinson - an outspoken gay rights advocate and Canada's first publicly declared gay MP - was once married to a woman, noted Kenney. He also said that NDP MP Libby Davies was once married to a man.

"Marriage is open to everybody, as long as they're a man and a woman," said Kenney.

"It doesn't say you can't marry if you're a homosexual. The fact is that homosexuals have been married and do marry."

Davies, the Vancouver MP who is openly lesbian, corrected the record Sunday to say she's never been married, but did live with her male partner for 24 years until he died of cancer in 1997.

"I thought I'd heard it all," said Davies. "I wouldn't expect too much out of Jason Kenney on this (subject), but this is absolutely absurd.

"If there was an award for making an idiotic statement, this guy would get it."

She said his comments trivialize the debate over same-sex marriage legislation currently before the House of Commons.

"It's very patronizing," Davies said.

But Kenney said Sunday his remarks were intended to illustrate a point made in numerous same-sex court cases. People aren't excluded from marrying because they are gay. They're excluded because marriage itself requires a man and a woman.

"Marriage - in the eyes of those of us who support traditional marriage - is, by its nature, a heterosexual institution that requires the complementarity of the sexes," Kenney said from Calgary.

As Kenney told the Punjabi Press Club, "there's not a single human rights document in the world that enumerates a specific right to same-sex marriage," including those of the United Nations, European Union and Organization of American States.

A new poll published on the weekend suggests Canadians remain deeply divided on the issue.

The EKOS Research Associates survey of slightly more than 1,000 Canadians found a 42-40 split in favour of allowing gay and lesbian couples to marry.

Alberta and Ontario shared the highest opposition, at 50 and 48 per cent respectively. Only 35 per cent of Ontarians polled supported gay marriage.

Other polls have also indicated Liberal support has dropped up to 10 points in the federal party's Ontario heartland, with the Conservatives picking up about six points.

An SES poll last week suggested the Liberals were down to 44 per cent in Ontario, compared with 54 per cent in October. The Tories polled 32 per cent, up from 26.

The polls coincide with an effort by Conservative Leader Stephen Harper to make ethnic minorities the target of a newspaper ad campaign on the same-sex marriage issue.

Kenney stressed that common front under sharp questioning from the Punjabi journalists, and repeated it Sunday.

"Virtually every minority ethnic or religious group in Canada has deeply set tradition with respect to family and marriage," said the MP. "I don't think Conservatives should be shy about pointing out that we share the same value."

Kenney believes his party's recent rise in Ontario may, in part, be attributed to its same-sex stand.

"I think the Liberal party is completely out of touch with a very large chunk of its traditional support base in urban Canada on this issue."

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