



News Release: Manitoba Human Rights Commission
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Manitoba Human Rights Commission Supports
Extension of Property Laws to Common-law Couples

Winnipeg - The Manitoba Human Rights Commission said today that it is pleased that the Manitoba Government has introduced legislation to extend family property laws to common-law couples, whether of the same or opposite sex.

“We urged the Government last year to amend a number of statutes with respect to family property so as to extend rights and responsibilities to common-law couples,” said Janet Baldwin, Commission Chairperson. “We are pleased that these amendments include laws that determine the division of property on the breakdown of a relationship or the death of a common-law partner.”

The Bill includes a scheme of registration that would permit common-law couples, both same and opposite sex, to enjoy similar property rights to married couples without having to meet a set period of cohabitation. Ms Baldwin noted that the need for such a registration scheme would be less pressing if same-sex couples were allowed to marry. “We welcome last week’s decision of the Ontario Superior Court which held that Canada’s current definition of marriage is unconstitutional in excluding same-sex couples,” she said. “I hope that this issue will be settled in the very near future by legislation or by an immediate reference to the Supreme Court of Canada.”

The Common-Law Partners’ Property and Related Amendments Act introduced yesterday follows The Charter Compliance Bill introduced earlier this session. That Act proposed a number of other amendments that affect common-law couples, including changes to The Adoption Act that permit same-sex common-law partners to jointly adopt a child.

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