

# Gays don't need human rights protection, say Alberta MLAs

By Kim Lunman  
Herald's Legislature Bureau

EDMONTON -- Alberta should not extend human rights to gays and lesbians because there is no proof of discrimination against homosexuals, Tory MLA Lorne Taylor said Wednesday.

"It seems to me the evidence of discrimination isn't there," Taylor, representative for Cypress-Medicine Hat, told a meeting to determine the fate of the province's human rights commission. "I think the evidence is quite contrary to that."

Taylor made the comments to an eight-member review panel that unanimously concluded in a report after a year-long public review last June that sexual orientation should be included in changes to human rights legislation.

The issue dominated what was considered the final plea by the government-appointed panel for stronger human rights in Alberta.

Taylor suggested gays and lesbians are not discriminated against since they make more money, are better educated and "three times more likely to have managerial positions" than the rest of the population.

"It's quite common knowledge," he told reporters later, citing the Wall Street Journal as one of his sources. "There's many articles out there . . . (Gays) have a higher income, better education, better jobs and that's a fact of life."

Barry McFarland, Liberal MLA for Little Bow, told the panel's chief commissioner and former head of the human rights commission Jack O'Neill, that the issue of including sexual orientation is casting a cloud over the commission's future.

He said 97 per cent of his constituents are opposed to change, which would protect Albertans from being fired or evicted on the grounds of their sexuality.

McFarland later said they are in favor of the panel's "more positive" recommendations such as protecting single mothers, but: "They just don't believe God made two men to procreate and they don't believe in homosexuality and there's no place for it so why should there be any laws protecting it?"

O'Neill later disputed Taylor's comments, saying: "I was brought up in the province of Quebec and I read in the

province of Quebec 15 allegedly gay persons were killed, murdered in the last five years. That's a major bit of discrimination because of a person's sexual orientation."

The recommendation for including sexual orientation in human rights legislation was among 75 the report made to the government.

It also urges spending up to \$300,000 to boost the commission's staff of four and eliminate a two-year backlog of complaints. It also recommends criminals and welfare recipients be protected along with gays under the Individual Rights Protection Act.

O'Neill also said he is concerned a proposal by the Tories to fold the commission into one agency with the multiculturalism commission, Advisory Council on Women's Issues and the Seniors' Advisory Council of Alberta will result in the tribunal being "merged into oblivion."

Community Development Minister Gary Mar played down the plan for restructuring.

"The premier and I have both made strong commitments to protecting human rights in the province in Alberta," he said.

CAL. HERALD, OCT 20, 1994