

Newfoundland hedges on human rights protection

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Newfoundland Justice Minister Paul Dicks has stated that Newfoundland is not ready for sexual orientation protection in its human rights legislation. In an interview in the *Sunday Express* (June 24, 1990), Dicks is quoted as explaining that there is "no consensus" on the part of the provincial Liberal government to add such protection, despite an advisory report from the provincial Human Rights Commission supporting human rights for lesbians and gay men. Dicks argued that he believes there is not enough "public demand" for such protection. Are human rights only to be supported when they are popular? Dicks went on to argue that "Every time you bring in a new basis of discrimination, you have to be sure of two things. One is that the government is satisfied that [that] form of discrimination is invalid, and secondly that you're not covering off legitimate areas of discrimination." According to Dicks, the Wells government believes that discrimination against lesbians and gay men may be justified and that it may be a "legitimate" area of discrimination. Meanwhile, lesbians and gay men in Newfoundland and Labrador face discrimination in housing, employment, and services, forcing many of us to hid who we are for fear of the social consequences.