

What the proposed law says

Marriage for civil purposes is the lawful union of two persons to the exclusion of all others.

Religious groups can refuse to perform marriages that are not in accordance with their beliefs.

SAME-SEX DEE



Alain Dubois spent 42 years with his partner, Lucien Deschênes, who died two years ago. He now shares his condo with Ruby, a Yorkshire terrier.

GORDON BECK THE GAZETTE

'YOU DON'T NEED LICENCE TO LOVE'

Ambivalence about exchanging vows exists for gays as it does for straight couples

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THE GAZETTE

Alain Dubois described his 42-year relationship with Lucien Deschênes as a wonderful one.

The couple shared many interests, like travel, opera and the theatre.

They lived together the entire time until Deschênes died two years ago.

Civil marriage wasn't an option for them. Even if it had been, Dubois wasn't drawn to the idea. "You don't need a marriage licence to love someone,"

said Dubois, 65, now a retiree in Longueuil.

His ambivalence toward marriage is shared by many others in the gay and lesbian community - hardly surprising in a province where the institution is unpopular with many heterosexual couples.

"It cuts two ways in the gay community," said Michael Hendricks, an advocate for gay and lesbian marriage.

On a personal level, as Quebeckers, gays and lesbians share an ambivalence about marriage and the virtues of legal contracts in

personal relationships, he said.

But on the other hand, "it's obviously a symbolic victory for the community. It's social recognition - something that was impossible to have as early as five years ago," said Hendricks, who married his partner, René LeBoeuf, in April. They became the first gay couple to wed in Quebec.

As among heterosexuals, there are a range of views in the community about getting married, said Evangeline Caldwell, a co-ordinator with the Quebec Coalition for Same-Sex Civil Marriage.

"When you ask gays and lesbians, 'Do you think it should be up to you to decide if you're going to get married ... or is it up to the state to forbid it?' the answer is very clear," she said.

"The community wants equality wants the dignity and respect that comes from equality. And that means civil marriage."

Dubois said he and Deschênes looked at the possibility of adopting a child in the 1970s. But it wasn't an option open to them.

"If we had the choice, we would have had children."

Anne Robinson, a retired law professor from Université Laval, conducted initial research for Hendricks's and LeBoeuf's long legal battle to marry.

Robinson, who has been living with a woman for the past nine years, also started to question the law in her personal life in the early 1990s. Married twice before to men, Robinson mused:

"prevented from (marrying)?"

Robinson and her partner plan to marry. But she does not think the civil-marriage issue is as important for older gay couples who have been living together for a long time. She suggested the marriage debate doesn't automatically spring to mind because they were denied the option for so long.

But she suggests young gays and lesbians will discuss marriage, as heterosexuals at 20 or 25 years old do with the person they're in love with.

"It's really fantastic to think that gays will be able to ask themselves the same questions as heterosexuals."

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