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A protester has a message for Thunder Bay-Superior North MP Joe Comuzzi at a public meeting Friday night.

# Gay vows a hot topic

## Constituents engage in heated discussion on same-sex marriage

**BY STEPHANIE MACLELLAN**  
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Joe Comuzzi said he's no closer to deciding his vote on same-sex marriage legislation last night, after the town hall meeting he hosted drew a large, loud and polarized cross-section of his constituents.

The Liberal MP for Thunder Bay-Rainy River named a number of federal issues he wanted to discuss with the people of Thunder Bay in his opening remarks, but nearly everyone who waited in two long lines at the microphones chose to focus on pending legislation that could allow same-sex marriage in Canada.

The standing-room-only crowd of more than 400 people at the Prince Arthur Hotel included people of all ages, with large numbers of students and senior

citizens. It also included a group of about 100 protesters who marched from the Indymedia Centre on Court Street to the hotel, and stood with flags and placards promoting same-sex marriage throughout the meeting.

Speakers who declared their support for the legislation outnumbered speakers who opposed it, but the applause in the room was just as loud for speakers from both sides of the debate.

Comuzzi campaigned on his opposition to same-sex marriage before the June election, but since then he has said he's undecided on how he would vote — even though, as a cabinet minister, he's required to vote with the legislation.

Comuzzi said after the meeting that what he heard will weigh heavily in his decision-making,

but he's no closer to making up his mind.

"This is something you don't move fast on. You have to listen to the people," he said.

"When I do make up my mind on this issue, and after I hear from everybody, I committed myself to the prime minister yesterday that he and I will meet and talk about it first."

Comuzzi has said if he votes against same-sex marriage legislation, it will be because the riding of Thunder Bay-Superior North voted him into Parliament knowing his stance.

One of those voters was an older man in a beige shirt who didn't give his name when he spoke.

"I'm a long-term Conservative voter, and I chose at the last election to vote for you," he told the MP. "I voted for you because you indicated a number of times during your campaign . . . that you would vote against same-sex mar-

riage, and you have a background of adhering to what you say."

Michel Dumont, a gay single father of a two-year-old, said he considers himself a Liberal but didn't vote for Comuzzi because of his stance on same-sex marriage.

"I was in a 13-year relationship, and we built a quarter-of-a-million-dollar house in Slate River, and if I had been a woman, I would have had half a house by now," he said. "We need marriage because we need divorce."

He also mentioned that a large number of gays and lesbians in Thunder Bay wouldn't speak at a public meeting because they are still closeted, but they support the legislation, too.

While the most common requests were for Comuzzi to vote with his faith (he's a Catholic) or to vote for human rights, others pleaded with him to vote based on pragmatism.

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Joe Comuzzi