

## McCallum Reveals Federal Liberals: Plans for the Spring

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News Editor



National Revenue Minister John McCallum, fresh from a Liberal caucus meeting to discuss their priorities for the spring, visited UPEI last Friday and revealed the government's plan for the spring session of parliament.

McCallum said the Liberal caucus meeting in Fredericton last week went smoothly and was not dominated by the same-sex marriage issue, a claim many media outlets have been making. He told the crowd that he expected same-sex marriage legislation to be introduced this week. McCallum, who along with the entire cabinet will be supporting same-sex marriage legislation, said the issue has more to do with Charter of Rights and Freedoms and minority rights than the actual concept of same-sex marriage itself.

If it were banned we would have to override the rights of this minority by using the not-withstanding clause, he said. "For the government and me, the Charter is sacrosanct. We need it to protect minorities from the tyranny of the majority."

McCallum said that same-sex marriage isn't the most important issue that will arise in the spring, saying there are many other important initiatives planned for the spring, but the national media is solely focusing on the same-sex marriage debate. He told the crowd an upcoming foreign policy review is

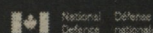
going to be very important.

The main goals of our government are to increase the size of the army by 5,000 and increase our [foreign] aid budget by 8 percent per year, he said. He added that how the government distributes foreign aid must change. We currently provide aid to 135 countries. In McCallum's opinion this is too many and we need to focus our resources.

McCallum said other important government initiatives this spring will be setting forth a plan to meet their Kyoto obligations and changes to immigration policy, which is currently plagued by excessive backlogs.

Some students criticized the minister for Canada's failure to meet its commitment to the UN to contribute 0.7% of its GDP to foreign aid. McCallum acknowledged the government's failure to meet its foreign aid commitment but said that the foreign aid budget is growing by 8% per year and will eventually achieve its goal.

McCallum discussed various topics with students and faculty, and he gave a lecture on the Expenditure Review committee he is chairing. He told the crowd that their exercise is to find ways to save the government \$12 Billion over 5 years. He emphasized that the size of government is not being cut and that the committee is instead looking to find money that is being spent on low priorities, which he claims, will result in a smarter government with more efficient spending.



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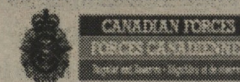
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