

Important ruling

Letter to the Editor
Halifax *Chronicle Herald*, 14 December 2009

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A couple years ago, a human rights panel in Alberta found a man to have contravened Alberta's human rights legislation in a letter he had sent to the Red Deer *Advocate*. The man had claimed that those seeking to normalize homosexuality were damaging society and encouraging wickedness.

This, said the panel, was hate speech.

The panel ordered the man never to disparage homosexuality again, not to criticise the complainant in the case, to apologize for the letter, to ask the *Advocate* to publish his apology, and to pay upwards of \$5,000. The man appealed the panel's finding and its remedy to Alberta's Court of Queen's Bench.

Just last week, a justice of the court ruled in favour of the appeal. The human rights panel erred on matters of both fact and law, the justice said. His ruling has implications for all provincial and territorial human rights bodies, if the justice is right that hate speech is solely under federal jurisdiction.

Clearly this is an important result, whether one supports freedom of expression or not. The letter to the editor you are currently reading is the first mention of it in the *Chronicle-Herald*.