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(Transportation to and from Seattle is provided.)

**WORLD news**

**CANADA**

The government of British Columbia is preparing an omnibus bill to amend the definition of spouse to include same-sex couples everywhere the word appears in provincial law, reports *Xtra West*.

Legislative Assembly member Tim Stevenson says the bill will be ready for the current legislative session and will take effect as soon as it is proclaimed.

"The new bill will change the definition of spouse in every single reference through every single law," Stevenson, who is gay, told *Xtra West*. "Every time that word comes up, it now will include gays and lesbians. This is more of a mopping-up of everything."

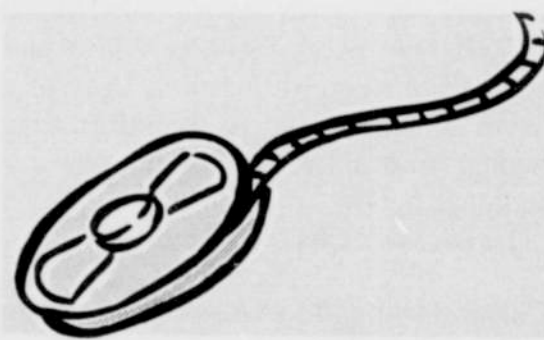
Spouse appears in British Columbia laws approximately 500 to 600 times.

The changes will take British Columbia queers farther along the road to equality than anywhere else in Canada, Stevenson says.

**KOREA**

The second Seoul International Queer Film and Video Festival is seeking entries.

Organizers say the first festival, held in 1998, was a big success. More than 10,000 people attended that year's 10 festival dates, Executive Director Seo Dong-Jin said in an April 11 press release.



"We are proud to abolish almost all lawful and institutional obstacles to head off the queer view in Korean society," he added. "In the end, the festival won the cultural civil rights to make and show queer film and video works."

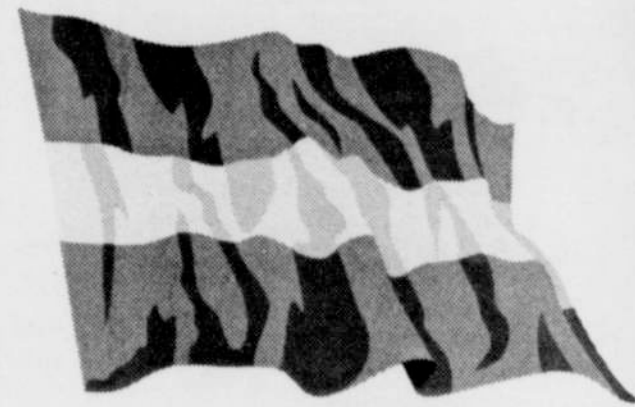
The festival runs Sept. 1 through 7. For detailed information, e-mail an inquiry to [queer21@thrur.net](mailto:queer21@thrur.net).

**LATVIA**

Prime Minister Andris Skele resigned April 12, one day before the Parliamentary Investigation Commission on Pedophilia announced that Skele and several other officials were probably connected, in some unspecified way, to a same-sex pedophilia scandal.

The commission said the officials should be considered immoral and probably should not be allowed to hold office again, according to a report from Latvia's Homosexuality Information Center.

An online Baltic states newspaper, *The Weekly Crier*, made no reference to pedophilia in its report on Skele's resignation.



"Skele resigned after two of three parties in his ruling coalition, Latvia's Way and the Fatherland and Freedom party, announced they could no longer work with him," the paper reported. "The shakeup had at least as much to do with style as substance. Skele, with a business background, was seen as an intelligent administrator capable of balancing budgets. But he was also seen as abrasive, heavy-handed and a poor team player."

**SAUDI ARABIA**

Nine gay transvestites in the western city of Al Qunfudhah have been jailed and will receive semimonthly beatings for two years.

Five of the men were sentenced to six years in prison and a total of 2,600 lashes. The other four men were sentenced to five years in prison and 2,400 lashes.

Police began observing the men after receiving reports that they were acting strangely, a spokesman says. As the investigation continued, the police determined the men were dressing in women's clothing and having sex together, a violation of Islamic law.

**SOUTH AFRICA**

The gay magazine *OUTright* is among the finalists for the prestigious Mondri Paper Magazine Awards in the categories of fashion and decor.

Other finalists in those categories include the international magazines *Marie Claire* and *Elle* and the South African periodicals *Femina*, *Style*, *House & Leisure* and *You/Huisgenoot*.

"It is really fantastic—proof that we have moved the magazine from fag rag to fash mag," says *OUTright* editor Daniel Somerville. "Gay magazines don't have to be cheap tatty affairs. With a hardworking and highly talented team we can produce a quality product for our community."

Winners will be announced May 10.



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