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SCOTT BRISON DECRIES 'CONSERVATIVE REVISIONIST HISTORY OF CANADA'

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Jason Kenney and his fellow Conservatives can't resist twisting Canadian values to reflect their ideological position on same-sex marriage and equality, Scott Brison says.

The Nova Scotia Liberal MP is referring to the Canadian citizenship guide that he describes as "Conservative revisionist history of Canada" penned by the Citizenship and Immigration Minister. The guide is aimed at foreigners studying and applying to become Canadian citizens.

"It is offensive that at the most senior political levels a minister and his staff would intervene to expunge the most socially progressive parts," Mr. Brison said.

Missing from the guide are any references to the legalization of same-sex marriage in Canada. The omission provoked outrage yesterday when it was revealed by The Canadian Press that Mr. Kenney had mention of the 2005 decision excised from an early draft, along with sections noting homosexuality was decriminalized in 1969 and that the Charter of Rights and Freedoms forbids discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

The Tories are fighting back hard, however, noting that some former Liberal leaders did not play glorious roles in Canadian history, such as during the sponsorship scandal and the war-time internment of Japanese Canadians. Neither event is mentioned Discover Canada, which was released in November.

"The Liberals need to stop trying to politicize the guide," Mr. Kenney's spokesman, Alykhan Velshi, told The Globe.

"Brison shouldn't ask for a guide on Canadian citizenship to really be a guide about the Liberal Party's role in Canadian history, because then we'd have to mention of MacKenzie King's rejection of Jewish refugees escaping Nazi persecution or endorsement of Japanese internment, or Pierre Trudeau's adoption of martial law, or the Liberal sponsorship scandal from the government of which he was a part."

Mr. Brison, meanwhile, is gay; he married his long-time partner, Maxime St. Pierre, two years ago.

He says progressive ways and laws in Canada that have attracted others to the country are not part of the latest guide. He stresses, too, that the Charter has had a remarkable impact on bringing equality to gays and lesbians.

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"The Charter of Rights is not a buffet. You can't pick from it the rights you like, and ignore the rest," Mr. Brison says. "When any Canadian's rights are left undefended, all Canadians' rights are compromised."

The Liberal MP notes there is no mention of Liberal prime minister Pierre Trudeau and the role he played in repatriating the Constitution in 1982 nor is there any mention of the "Canadian flag debate, or the legacy of Lester Pearson."

Oh, and Canada's longest serving prime minister, William Lyon Mackenzie King, is not given any ink, either.

Conservative politicians play prominent roles in the guide, however – Sir John A. Macdonald, George-Etienne Cartier and Robert Borden are all featured.

Mr. Velshi defends the guide, saying writing it was a year-long process and that the Immigration Minister did not edit every word. "But we do take responsibility for the final product," he told The Globe.

"I'm happy to say that the end result has been widely celebrated as a clear, balanced depiction of Canada, and a useful resource for all Canadians – both new and old – and was widely praised when it was launched across the political spectrum.

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"If we had incorporated all the excellent suggestions we received, Discover Canada would have been encyclopedic, probably more than a hundred pages, and not an appropriate study aide for new immigrants."

In the end, Mr. Velshi said, difficult choices had to be made in the editing process.

Mr. Brison, however, suggests Mr. Kenney's personal beliefs played a significant role in those decisions. "He once said that gays already have the right to marry, as long as its to a member of the opposite sex."