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Status of gays in military still undetermined—Collins

By The Canadian Press

The federal government has not yet decided whether to end restrictions against homosexuals serving in the military, Associate Defence Minister Mary Collins said Thursday.

"No final decision has been made," she told reporters outside the Commons.

There were widespread media reports Thursday saying the government was about to announce a new policy lifting restrictions against homosexuals in the armed forces.

A document dated Wednesday outlining the proposed new Canadian policy had been circulating in the Pentagon in Washington.

"Any speculation about an announcement was premature, obviously," said Collins. "The department is still working on all of the issues that are involved."

The minister said if the Americans were sent an announcement it was a case of someone "getting out ahead of the game."

She said some matters remain to be resolved, but she refused to say whether the policy ran into flack from conservative members of the Tory caucus.

"All of the matters haven't been finalized," she said.

There have been a number of court cases and hearings before human rights tribunals on the issue of homosexual soldiers, sailors and flyers in recent years.

Last month, Justice Joseph McDonald of the general division of Ontario Court, ruled that the Canadian Human Rights Act was unconstitutional because it fails to protect homosexuals from discrimination.

He gave the federal government six months either to appeal

the decision or amend the Act to add protection.

The law had been challenged by Graham Haig, an Ottawa gay rights activist, and Joshua Birch, a former air force captain who was forced to quit the military last year after revealing his homosexuality.

Prime Minister Brian Mulroney would say little on the subject.

"The matter is before the courts now in some ways. If there's a change in government policy, we'll let you know."

Bill Domm, member for Peterborough, said he's seen no policy draft in caucus.

MP Stan Darling said he doesn't object to what he's seen reported about a policy change. But he said homosexuals in the military would have to be circumspect, just as their heterosexual colleagues must.

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Homosexual
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