

I am writing with regards to Bill C6 - *An Act to Amend the Criminal Code (conversion therapy)* which has thankfully been re-introduced after the prorogation of parliament earlier this year. As a gay man, I feel that it important to set out my views on it. While I am fortunate that I was never exposed to this “therapy”, which is extremely damaging and ineffective, I know that not everyone is as lucky.

By and large, I support the Bill. Conversion “therapy” is a deeply pernicious, harmful and ultimately ineffective practice that attempts to bully individuals into a sexual orientation and/or gender identity/behaviour that is considered to be “acceptable” regardless of the mental harm it causes the subject. It should not be dignified with the term “therapy” and its practitioners should be regarded, to my mind, in the same light as purveyors of patent medicines in the nineteenth century.

What makes an individual straight and/or cis (to challenge the usual construction in this debate of gay and/or trans), is a deeply individual matter and should be left to the individual to decide. It is not amenable to change and efforts to do so are rejected by most reputable scientists and medical personnel. Attempting to do so should be seen as an expression of the inability to deal with society except on rigidly-held gender-role and binary expectations—the world as it “should be” rather than the world as it is.

I believe that the Bill adequately protects children from this practice and is long overdue. However, my one quibble with the Bill is that I do not believe it extends protections far enough for adults. I would very much like to see the Bill amended so that section 320.102 has the words “against that person’s will” removed. In other words, I would prefer to see an outright ban on the practice of conversion “therapy” for everyone.

To my mind, failure to do so would contravene section 3 of the *Canadian Human Rights Act*.