

November 5, 2020

Concerns re Bill C-6

I would like to express my concerns regarding Bill C-6, ban on Conversion Therapy.

I wish to acknowledge that I have read some accounts of the harms that were done to some individuals who were forced or coerced into receiving some form of Conversion Therapy with regards to orientation or gender expression and I sympathize with them and agree that it was wrong and needs to be outlawed.

My concern is that Bill C-6, as it currently stands, will affect a person's freedom to choose their orientation or gender expression. I have known several individuals who lived in a particular orientation for some time (often many years), but who, for varied reasons of their own, made the decision to live in a different orientation. It was not an easy transition and they required much help, which they sought freely of their own will. Certainly, no one should be forced against their will or choice to live a certain lifestyle, but by the same token, the person who makes a choice for a certain lifestyle should be allowed to live that lifestyle and seek whatever support they believe they need to achieve that end.

I would like to share two stories of people I have encountered in my life. One is that of a friend who grew up in a family of his parents and one older sister. He believed that his father loved his sister more than him and in his young child's mind, he believed that the reason for this was that his sister was a girl while he was a boy. He believed that his father would love him if he was a girl instead of a boy. So, he began to dress like a girl, in secret because he somehow knew this was not acceptable in those days. After a lot of work in therapy, he was able to see that he did not have a gender dysphoria as we know it these days, he was just a boy who desperately wanted his father's love. My fear is that there may be a child today who is in a similar situation but if Bill C-6 becomes law, that child might be on the way to gender reassignment therapy before his or her true issues are found.

The second story involves a patient in the hospital I work in. It happened many years ago. An elderly gentleman was admitted with a broken hip. He was sent to the operating room to have surgery. When the staff started the surgery, they discovered that he was anatomically a female. The operation was completed and the patient was sent to the ward for recovery and rehabilitation. The Psychiatric department was also consulted, as was the custom in those days when an issue did not seem to be of a physical/medical nature. It was found that the patient was indeed female. She had been orphaned as a young teenager and had no relatives or other supports and she found that if she pretended to be male it was much easier for her to get along in the world, so she lived as a male for the majority of her life. While in hospital, our staff continued to address the patient as male.

I wanted to share these stories to demonstrate that gender issues are varied and complex. I am afraid that generic, one size fits all, cookie cutter laws do not do justice to the issue nor to the individuals involved.

I most emphatically support the outlawing of therapy which is violent, abusive, degrading or forced on an individual who does not want it. I would respectfully request that consideration be given to clarify exactly what type of conversion therapy would be banned by Bill C-6 and that such therapy be defined in the bill. I believe that this expanded clarity would then also afford the protection that is needed by those individuals who wish to exercise their freedom of choice to request counsel on the issues of gender expression or orientation and also to those individuals who provide respectful and safe guidance and counsel on these types of issues.

In summary, I wish to respectfully request that the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights amend Bill C-6 to clarify that the type of therapy which is being outlawed is that of a forced, unwanted, violent, degrading or demeaning nature and that individuals may exercise their freedom of choice to request and receive respectful, safe counsel.

Thank you for accepting this brief.

Sincerely,

Tony Nakazato