

To: Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights regarding Bill C – 6.

As a mother, grandmother, and retired social worker (MSW, U. of Manitoba), I have grave concerns about the definition of “conversion therapy” as it is used in Bill C – 6.

Those of us employed in the counselling/social work field in the 1970s, understood “conversion therapy” to be a discredited practice using techniques such as shaming or emotionally and/or physically painful stimuli (eg. electric shock, nausea-inducing drugs) to make an LGBTQ person associate pain with their sexual preferences and, thus, “convert”. Neither I nor my professional colleagues would ever have considered this to be therapy, and none of us would ever have participated in such practices. This was not part of our education or training.

In the past 40 years we have learned so much about how trauma and adverse childhood experiences affect the human person. The psychological trauma suffered by World War II veterans, if even addressed, was given the name “shell shock”. Later, we acknowledged the effects of war on returning soldiers and called it post traumatic stress disorder. Now we recognize that prolonged verbal/physical abuse in domestic relationships can cause complex post traumatic stress disorder. With new knowledge comes the development of new therapies to help those with psychiatric disorders. Great strides have been made in the area of counselling or “talk therapy”.

While we are a long way from a complete understanding of the human mind and its aberrations, we know that many of those having gender dysphoria also have underlying mental health issues that are dangerous to ignore. Denial of underlying psychiatric disorders leads to neglecting urgent treatment; just read some of the painful accounts written by people who regret transitioning to the opposite sex and undergoing sex reassignment surgery, none of which alleviated the underlying issues.

In conclusion, I am totally against the use of force or the use of techniques of 1970s conversion therapy to change a person’s sexual identity. At the same time, it is imperative that:

- 1) parents have the right to ask for, and receive, counsel for their children who are questioning their sexual orientation,
- 2) anyone with gender identity issues can access the therapy/counselling of their choice,
- 3) therapists/counsellors be allowed to authentically practice their profession. Today’s therapists are NOT practitioners of “conversion therapy” – please fix the definition.