

Brief:

**Justice Committee
Bill C6**

By Nancy Westad

November 30, 2020

Honorable members of the Justice Committee,

Thank you for your service as servant leaders representing the people of Canada. It is with great concern that I write you regarding Bill C6 in what I see are negative long- and short-term implications this Bill brings in its current form for LGBTQ2 youth today. I can state this with certainty as I was once one of those youth who sought support and counselling regarding my same sex attraction. It was in those most formative and confusing years where I needed the most help and I believe this Bill will limit the access and crucial supports for kids that I was once so lucky to receive. It literally saved my life.

For starters, the preamble of the Bill begins with the premise that, “**...conversion therapy causes harm to society because, among other things, it is based on and propagates myths and stereotypes about sexual orientation and gender identity, including the myth that a person’s sexual orientation and gender identity can and ought to be changed.**” This preamble is deceptive. Let me explain by sharing my story.

My Story

As a teen, I did not want to have same sex attraction nor was I sure I wanted to live out what my attractions were leading me to explore. I was not a religious person and no one in my circle of friends, educators or otherwise ever indicated to me that this was “wrong or bad or sinful...” I saw health risks as a reality because my friends were openly living out their sexuality and suffered emotionally and physically from their behaviour. These stories served as a caution for me. Thankfully, I was able to find some trusted adults who’s supports were so readily available. I was able to feel safe, heard and respected with my testimonies and boundaries. They never mistreated me in any way even after I did explore my sexuality and shared my confusion and desire to not pursue further. I was hurting but had hope. There was no abuse or hate, propaganda or use of stereotypes as described in your Bill. **I was loved.** These supports I believe kept me from suicide and helped me feel whole as a young woman. These supports led me to be able to have healthy friendships and later get married and have a family of my own. I have been married for 23 years and have 3 beautiful children. I still live with same sex attraction but much more reduced. Before you jump to conclusions about “lack of healing of homosexuality and proof etc....” or call me a closet bisexual, let me tell you that **my identity is not my sexuality.** These socially constructed terms to identify people are actually misleading, confusing and more restricting than the narrative that is being proposed in your Preamble of this Bill. Dare I remind the Government that the curriculums taught now widely in our Canadian schools talk liberally about sexuality being fluid. Bill C6 contradicts this theory stating that there should be **no “practice, treatment or service designed to change a person’s sexual orientation to heterosexual or gender identity to cisgender, or to repress or reduce non-heterosexual attraction or sexual behavior. For greater certainty, this definition does not include a practice, treatment or service that relates:**

- (a) to a person’s gender transition; or**
- (b) to a person’s exploration of their identity or to its development.”**

What if kids change their minds? Kids are known for doing this. What about kids like me? There would be no support once Bill C6 is passed. It is as though these categories of people do not exist in the Federal Government’s mind **but, I can assure you that there are thousands of us.** Bill C6 **discriminates** against those children and youth who have different beliefs and want to exercise those beliefs.

The current definition is simply too broad and is openly discriminating against the aforementioned peoples. If this Bill was clearly outlining the criminalization of coercive or degrading practices designed to change a person's sexual orientation or gender identity, then I believe this would be acceptable. No one wants to return to shock therapies as was once carried out by State facilities and some organizations. I would add that there are already many existing laws that protect Canadian citizens from many forms of physical and emotional abuse.

Who would be harmed?

To think that the people who once helped support my wishes as a teen would today be labeled criminals by this Federal Government is disturbing. These supports would be my friends' parents, a teacher, a camp counsellor, Therapist and a Pastor. All people with a variety of cultures, beliefs and backgrounds. This Bill discriminates against private citizens and professionals with differing backgrounds and cultures than LGBTQ2 activist ideology. The Federal Government has now deemed themselves the **judge** of what is permissible for conversations in private homes, private camps, schools, Therapists offices and places of worship. The Federal Government now sees themselves as the **sole authority** to decide what is considered acceptable supports based entirely on **one ideology**. Adults who desire to reach out and support kids will fear fines or jail time. They will withhold support making those kids more at risk for self-harm and suicide. **This Federal Government would be denying a form of mental health care that these kids so desire and need.** How shameful. This is contrary to the Canadian ideals of access to health care and supports that we all hold dear.

This Bill raises additional concerns limiting parental rights. Parents are the primary educators and caregivers of their children, not the State. The State does not determine the acceptable values, cultural practices nor religious beliefs in the home or what is to be publicly professed or practiced. Bill C6 openly discriminates against those who exercise religious freedoms or differing cultural practices in their homes and in public that are not embracing or affirming LGBTQ2 ideology. **The State is not to determine what are acceptable beliefs nor acceptable holy texts or teachings privately or publicly. Totalitarian regimes exercise these tactics. This Bill in its current form is not democratic, tolerant or loving. It is guilty of its own myths and coercive practices that will harm vulnerable populations, the very children it claims to help. There should be equality under the law for all people of various cultures and beliefs to be able to freely and publicly exercise those beliefs and have access to supports as a child or youth without intrusive Government interference.** May I remind our Government that various practices to remove, or indoctrinate another value system was done through residential schools. The State through the church forcibly removed children from their homes and insisted on teaching children the "right values, language and culture to remove the savage" from generations to put them on what was then believed to be the "right side of history." The Government was complicit using the church to abuse and destroy generations of First Nations families. To this day, the Government is working on some form of reconciliation. This current Government would be repeating history. Threatening criminalization of parents and community leaders who care for families who speak about sexuality or gender identity outside of the LGBTQ2 affirming values is reprehensible. Parents and community caregivers should be able to freely speak with their own children and community about sexuality and gender. Parents should be free to set house rules about sex and relationships. Would not a parent want to protect their children from what they know and believe is behaviour that has increase health risks? It is already fairly intrusive of our Government to have various sexual education programs in the schools that families can't opt out of. Much LGBTQ2 ideology is embedded in curriculum. These courses or content often can confuse children or leave them with questions about sexuality and gender which they will bring to their parents or caregivers. It should not be criminal for families to be able to share such subjects in the context of their own personal family values.

As this Government may know, we live in a very diverse nation made up of peoples who represent so many cultural and religious backgrounds. It should not surprise the Government that many do not have LGBTQ2 affirming beliefs. For a Canadian Government to criminalize their beliefs would be disheartening and heartbreaking, especially if these families escaped a nation whereby, they fled in order to have safety to freely live their culture and beliefs. Canada was once known for such safety and freedoms.

Limiting access of supports

The limiting of access to professional supports whether it be through a therapist or religious counsellor/Pastor/Leader is perplexing to me. It is widely known that the LGBTQ2 community is a vulnerable community for multiple reasons. Many in the community do desire to access supports that would help reduce some sexual activity for various reasons. One example would be for fidelity. **Why would it be OK for a heterosexual person to have access to therapies to reduce their sexual activity or reduce their “drive” but now with Bill C6, LGBTQ2 people would be denied those supports. That’s discrimination.**

Regarding children with gender dysphoria, there are numerous studies that indicate that children often grow out of it, up to 80%. *“At the time of follow-up in adolescence or adulthood, these studies showed that, for the majority of children (84.2%; n ¼ 207), the GD desisted.”* (Steensma p.1). In fact, many countries are reversing course when it comes to allowing children to transition and to alter their bodies permanently. Criminalizing adults who are wanting to support children through the process of discovery if the child now appears to want to affirm their biological gender is again a Government overreach. **The Government knows the research is ongoing, therefore Bill C6 is reckless.** These surgeries are life altering and permanent. This may leave the Government liable in the future and open for legal litigation. I strongly encourage the Government to not criminalize professional and religious counseling voluntarily requested and consented to by LGBTQ2 Canadians of any age. This consent should extend to parents/guardians of minors as previously explained.

The current wording in Bill C6 indicates that professionals from medical, social work and clinical psychology are left to dismiss their research, experience, and ethical responsibilities to submit to an ideologically driven legislation or risk losing their jobs, licencing or be jailed. **This is strong arming multiple professions by using fear and intimidation through legislation.** These patients could not even be referred to another country for treatment as the Bill also makes it criminal to leave the country for therapy. **It appears that the Canadian Government wants to control how their citizens seek medical aid abroad even if not paid for by our national healthcare, removing autonomy of each individual personal health decisions.**

Conclusion

I can’t in good conscience remain silent when I see such a poorly written legislation open to so much potential harm to a wide population base, most importantly to a population it claims to protect, LGBTQ2

children and youth. If a child or youth came to me and were in need of someone to walk with them as they journeyed through their emotions regarding their sexuality or gender, I could not simply affirm the LGBTQ ideology as the sole source of information. This would be dishonest and misleading. If that same youth or child expressed that they did not want to have same sex attraction and desired help for this, I would support them in helping them access the supports they needed to meet them on their journey. **I personally know the value and respect this brings and it would be demeaning to push them away or coerce them to affirm the ideology that they do not believe or want. That would be abusive even if the Government deems it legal. I would love them like I was loved. They will not need to walk this alone.**

Sincerely,
Nancy Westad

Citation

Thomas D. Steensma, Ph.D., Jenifer K. McGuire, Ph.D., M.P.H., Factors Associated with Desistence and Persistence of Childhood Gender Dysphoria: A Quantitative Follow-Up Study