

Bill C-6 – Submission to the Justice Committee  
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I am writing to protest the imprecise, unhelpful and Charter-unworthy wording of the present bill named C-6, presently before Parliament. While I understand and applaud the apparent motivations behind the bill, its present iteration, without amendment, is dangerous to the historic and Charter-protected freedoms of religious belief, practice, teaching, expression and conscience that have characterized our history and best aspirations as a nation.

History has shown, and our national history has confirmed, that robust affirmations of rights and freedoms must be declared, advanced and legislated with great care for *all* of the citizens of the society. A balance between the advancement of civil rights of some, whilst retaining the conscience rights of others who may disagree with said advancements, has consistently been the hallmark of the most robust and free societies, and of Canada. This is in danger now.

In this particular case, the proposed wording negates almost three centuries of religious rights of conscience that have been enshrined in our constitutional documents, statutes, laws and human rights tribunals. It leaves open the possibility that pastors and religious leaders, teaching the historic, unchanged, two thousand years-old ethics of the Scriptures of the Christian faith, may suddenly be criminally liable simply for teaching those ethics and doctrines faithfully, as they have always done.

As a Christian pastor, I am bound by conscience before Christ, bound by oath and covenant to my denomination and church, to teach and preach historic Christian orthodoxy, including the historic Christian definition of sexuality as an element of the Bible's vision for human flourishing within the design of God. It is a position to which millions of Canadian Christians adhere, and over a billion citizens of the world adhere.

The Minister of Justice has made some verbal reassurances that good-faith conversations between family members, and within religious contexts, are meant to be exempted from the parameters of this law. If that is so, then this exemption, which affirms the historic right of conscience and religious freedom in our nation, needs to be *in the document itself*, not in verbal comments that bear no legal or political weight. We do not enshrine our deepest freedoms in press conferences, we enshrine them into our laws.

The Criminal Code, which delineates some of the harshest of judicial punishments of any legislation, is therefore a particularly important locus for careful, thoughtful, measured and balanced expressions of rights, duties and freedoms.

Please amend the legislation to enshrine, in the document itself, the historic conscience and freedom of religious expression rights of Christians and other faiths to teach our religious faith, without fear of criminal sanction, to restore the balance needed between protecting rights and protecting the right to disagree for 'conscience' sake, so that freedom for one, is freedom for all.