

BRIEF SUBMISSION
CONVERSION THERAPY BAN: A PLEA TO FIX THE DEFINITION

Submitted by
Matthew Nielsen
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To whom it may concern:

I am a concerned citizen writing about the pressing need to fix the definition of conversion therapy in Bill C-6. I am specifically concerned about the forthright limitation of human rights displayed in the current definition: *“a 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 behaviour.”*

This definition represents a repression of fundamental Canadian rights and freedoms entrenched in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, in particular our Fundamental Freedoms, including: *(a) freedom of conscience and religion, (b) freedom of thought, belief, opinion, and expression*. In short:

- This definition discriminates against Canadians who freely seek any treatment they might personally desire, regardless of their sexual orientation or identity, following the dictates of their own conscience and beliefs;
- This definition wrongly conflates sexual orientation with gender identity, which violates the findings of research in the field of psychology;
- This definition leaves young children vulnerable to physically and psychologically damaging ideas before they possess the physical and emotional maturity to understand the ramifications of their decisions, particularly as it pertains to gender identity questions;
- This definition potentially criminalizes professional and religious counselling that all Canadians should have the right to seek of their own free will, according to their own beliefs and the dictates of their own consciences;
- This definition removes these Fundamental Rights and Freedoms from any practicing counselor, who is entitled to their own beliefs and matters of conscience, upon which their professional practice will succeed or fail;
- This definition silences meaningful and necessary conversation about sexuality and gender, which are deep matters of conscience to many Canadians, including myself.

I would like to unequivocally state here that **I absolutely support a ban on any degrading or coercive practices designed to affect or change anyone’s sexual identity**. Citizens of Canada have a right to protection from any such *coercive* reaction.

However, **the current definition discriminates against the rights of any Canadians who desire to seek their preferred mode of counselling about their sexuality or gender identity**. As currently written, this definition is prejudicial against anyone who desires to address personal issues of their own sexuality for reasons of conscience or their own personal beliefs. Free Canadians deserve the right to seek counselling of their own choosing, not only those counselors approved by activist agendas. No Canadian citizen should be discriminated against by truncation of their available counselling options on the basis of their gender or sexual identity! To restrict their free choices to seek the counselling they desire is blatantly discriminatory.

Additionally, under the current definition, the government is reaching into personal lives with too heavy a hand; this begins a slippery slope into legislating the practice of psychotherapy, which ought to instead be driven by best practices informed by research expertise in the field, not simply by blunt force of government legislation. Have authoritative sources in Sex Psychology even been consulted in this process? Canada has some of the best in this field.

Leading Canadian sexuality experts agree that, as written, this definition is highly problematic. Dr. James Cantor and Dr. Deborah Soh, top Canadian specialists in Sexology, agree that this particular legislation is dangerously wrong in its wording. In a recent interview with Benjamin Boyce (2020), they make some important claims for your consideration:

- Soh herself claims that this bill is “anti-scientific” (Boyce, 2020, 35:34 - 35:46). Those who are crafting it have a disregard, or misunderstanding of, what scientific research has actually discovered about these issues. Our legislation should be based on the best science available
- Dr. Cantor reminds us that sexual orientation is a different matter altogether than gender identity; 12 out of 12 studies done with young children found that the majority of children who want to live as another gender change their mind about it by the time they reach bodily sexual maturity (Boyce, 2020, 15:55 - 17:20). **The current definition wrongfully, and dangerously, conflates sexual orientation with sexual identity, a mistake according to professional psychotherapeutic findings.**

Please carefully listen to and consult the experts in the affiliated research field over and above activist voices when reframing this definition.

Further, while Bill C-6 expressly allows counselling, medical, and surgical efforts to change a child's gender or sex, it expressly prohibits any support for a child freely seeking to de-transition back to their birth sex. This is not even-handed, and may cause severe psychological distress to vulnerable Canadian children caught in the middle of a crisis of identity.

For the aforementioned reasons, it is my urgent request that you re-formulate the definition, and remove gender identity from it altogether. Additionally, re-crafting the statement to honour the rights of Canadians who freely choose to seek the counselling they want regarding these challenging matters would most faithfully uphold the dignity of the Fundamental Freedoms guaranteed in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

Please fix the definition of “conversion therapy” to be respectful of the research and of Canadian's rights, both now and in the future. Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,
Matt Nielsen

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Boyce, Benjamin A. (2020, October 31). *Criminal Therapies | with Drs Debra Soh & James Cantor* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8lvedwFfTdk&feature=emb_logo