



THE GOSPEL COALITION CANADA

Submission to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights by The Gospel Coalition of Canada on Bill C-6, ‘*An Act to Amend the Criminal Code (conversion therapy)*’

Introduction:

The Gospel Coalition Canada is an independent coalition of Canadian pastors, educators and leaders representing numerous Protestant churches who hold to a high view of Scripture and who have a passion and commitment to Christ-centered evangelism and preaching.

Along with most Bible-believing Christians, we are strongly opposed to all forms of coercive and manipulative activities. We follow the example of the Apostle Paul who said:

“Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we *persuade* others.” (2 Corinthians 5:11 ESV; italics added)

Christian witness and mission, in its best iterations, focuses on proclamation, discussion and prayer and therefore we would gladly join in support of any clearly written and tightly defined legislation that would outlaw abusive or coercive activity. However, with respect, the current legislation as written does not appear to be clearly written or tightly defined and thus its application could be overextended and interpreted to include what are – and should remain – lawful activities.

Our request for further clarification may be summarized as follows:

- I. We respectfully ask the Committee to please clarify in Bill C-6 what is meant by “conversion therapy”. Further, we ask the Committee to please clarify specifically what is meant by the terms “practice, treatments and service”. These terms ought to be understood in a strictly medical sense and should not be interpreted in a ministerial or pastoral sense.
- II. We ask the Committee to please clarify what is meant by the proposed offence in 320.103(1): “causes a person who is under the age of 18 years to undergo conversion therapy”? Would a parent be “causing a child to undergo conversion therapy” if they spoke to the child about what the Bible teaches concerning gender and sexuality? Would a Youth Pastor be “causing a child to undergo conversion therapy” if passages of the Bible were discussed and prayed over in a group or private study? Would a lay counsellor be “causing a child to undergo conversion therapy against their will” if the parents and the child came for a private study of relevant bible passages? This passage is ambiguous and our pastors, educators and leaders request clarity and certainty in this law.
- III. We request the Committee please clarify what sorts of activities would be prohibited with respect to “reducing non-heterosexual attraction or sexual behaviour”. Christians have been generally consistent in our biblically based conviction that, in the long run, people

will be happier and healthier if they restrict sexual activity to the context of covenant marriage or practice dedicated celibacy. Does the government intend to criminalize that conviction? Should not Christians be free to teach and advocate for their understanding of best practices as relates to human sexuality? If it is only abusive or coercive practices that are being targeted, we request that the government make that explicit in the language of the bill.

As stated above, we support the criminalization of abusive or coercive practices, however, we also believe that parents and faith communities should have the right to discuss, advocate and encourage faithful obedience to Scriptural principles with respect to human sexuality and personal identity.

To be a Christian, fundamentally, is to believe that our Creator and Redeemer is the One uniquely qualified to define us and to direct us into activities, beliefs and behaviours that will lead to happiness, health and flourishing for us as well as for our friends and neighbours. We ask that the government ensure that our right to proclaim, counsel and encourage according to these convictions be safeguarded in the language and wording of this proposed legislation.

With this Submission, we hope that our desire to seek the welfare of all Canadians, particularly those most vulnerable to abusive means of coercion, has been clearly communicated. We remain open to dialogue with all members of society as we collectively seek the advancement of human dignity and flourishing in this country.

5 December 2020

From the Board of Directors writing on behalf of The Gospel Coalition Canada / Coalition pour l'Évangile Canada

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