

A Brief to
The Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights
Concerning Bill C-6
“An Act to Amend the Criminal Code (conversion therapy)”

Summary of Recommendations

- **Section 320.101:** the definition of conversion therapy is imprecise, ambiguous and overly broad, grouping practices and techniques that differ hugely in their origins, practice, and effectiveness
- **Section 320.102:** unnecessary as there are already provisions in the Criminal Code describing absence of consent (i.e. common law principles stating that assault is committed when one does not freely consent or understand)
- **Section 320.103:** removes parental rights including freedom of religion, explicitly supporting LGBTQ2+ beliefs to the exclusion of all others
- **Sections 320.104, 320.105:** the government of medical health practitioners should fall under the jurisdiction of medical societies and licensing organizations; addressing false claims should fall under provisions for false advertising and fraud. With the definition of conversion therapy so poorly defined, there is no reasonable way to enforce bans on advertising or receiving remuneration.

Dear Members of the Justice Committee, Clerk of the Committee,

Thank you for your service, and your consideration in this matter.

After reading the text of this bill C-6, the Legislative Summary, and many of the Briefs submitted to the Committee, it is my firm conviction that amendments proposed in Bill-C6 pose a significant threat to freedom of religion in Canada, and to the well-being of our nation's families and children.

The most significant problem with Bill C-6 is the ambiguous and all-consuming definition of conversion therapy, and the attribution of wholly negative consequences. The government is attempting to define in the Criminal Code something that many professional organizations, with far more qualifications, have not yet addressed (including the Canadian Medical Association)¹. The negative outcomes attributed to non-religious conversion therapy in the Legislative Summary (distress, anxiety, depression, negative self-image, sexual dysfunction, suicidal thoughts, etc.)² are identical to those described by some after gender reassignment, by those experiencing mental health issues unrelated to sexual orientation or gender identity, by those struggling with addiction, and by adolescents in general. It would seem that “conversion therapy” may cause no worse than what it purports to address – and religious practices were the only ones described as leading to “relief, happiness, an improved relationship with God and perceived improvements in mental health status.”³

The Minister of Justice gave assurances that this Bill would not criminalize private conversations about sexual orientation or gender identity with school or pastoral counsellors, faith leaders, friends or family members⁴. But that is not the explicit intent and outcome of the bill: no individual or organization may seek 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.”⁵ Parents are thus prohibited from seeking religious counsel or pastoral care for their children struggling with these issues. “Conversion” is certainly allowed - but only *to* homosexuality or gender identity different than that of birth, never the reverse. Truth of religious convictions is not allowed - at least, not for our children.

Sincerely held and practiced religious beliefs demand, as a foundational element, the passing on of traditions and teaching to children (e.g. Deuteronomy 6:1-7, Psalm 78:4-8, Ephesians 6:1-4). The Holy Bible is clear in its condemnation of sexual immorality, including homosexuality and transgender behaviours (e.g. Genesis 5:2, Matthew 19:4-6, Romans 1:18-27, Hebrews 13:4), as well as its command to show the fruit of God's Spirit in patience, peace, kindness, and self-control (e.g. Galatians 5:22-23, 1 Corinthians 13:4-7). Proposing that the advertisement of conversion therapy be added under a subheading “Offences Tending to Corrupt Morals” is thus terribly ironic and offensive to those who hold a biblical view. Behaviours such as physical violence and coercion are condemned both in the Bible and already in the criminal code; Bill C-6 is not necessary, and will cause unspeakable harm.

As stated in some of the Briefs submitted to the committee regarding this Bill, children are indeed struggling - and the consequences under Bill C-6 of failing to provide them with wise counsel from those who care deeply for them will be horrific. Please do not recommend passage of this Bill C-6.

Sincerely,

Kelsey Harley

1. Karin Phillips and Julian Walker, [Legislative Summary of Bill C-6: An Act to amend the Criminal Code \(conversion therapy\)](#), Publication no. 43-2-C6-E, Parliamentary Information and Research Service, Library of Parliament, Ottawa, 5 October 2020.
2. Ibid, s. 1.2.3.
3. Ibid, s. 1.2.3.
4. Department of Justice, *Proposed changes to Canada's Criminal Code relating to conversion therapy* (as quoted in [1]).
5. [Bill C-6 An Act to amend the Criminal Code \(conversion therapy\)](#), 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament (first reading version, 1 October 2020).