



Submission to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights by Cornerstone Baptist Church, Orillia on Bill C-6, ‘*An Act to Amend the Criminal Code (conversion therapy)*’

Introduction:

Cornerstone Baptist Church, Orillia is a Canadian Baptist Church with a long history of faithfully preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ by word and deed in our local community, and throughout the wider world.

Along with most Bible believing Christians, we are strongly opposed to all forms of coercive and manipulative activities. Following the Apostle James we believe that:

“the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere.” (James 3:17 ESV)

Christian witness and mission, in its best form, emphasizes clear proclamation, winsome appeal and gentle persuasion, through relationship and the power of prayer, therefore we would gladly join in support of any clearly written and tightly defined legislation that would outlaw abusive or coercive activities. However, with respect, the current legislation 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.

Concerns:

Our specific concerns with respect to the proposed legislation may be summarized as follows:

- I. The terms “practice, treatments and service” need clarification. Are these terms to be understood in a strictly medical sense or should they be interpreted also in a pastoral/religious sense?
- II. The phrase “causing a child to undergo conversion therapy against their will” needs to be more accurately described. 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?

- III. The scope of activity prohibited with respect to “reducing non-heterosexual attraction or sexual behaviour” needs to be defined. The Bible clearly teaches that, in the long run, people will be happier and healthier if they restrict sexual activity to the context of covenant marriage or practice faithful celibacy. Does the government intend to criminalize this 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 coercion that is 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 churches should have the right to discuss, advocate and encourage faithful obedience to Scriptural principals 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

Rev. Paul Carter on behalf of and with the support of the Board of Elected Elders of Cornerstone Baptist Church, Orillia