

**A Brief Submitted to the Justice Committee
Parliament of Canada
Pertaining to Bill 6
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I am now 64 years old. I married my husband in 2016. I finally came out of the closet in 2014. I was married to a woman until she sadly died from cancer in 2013.

She was my best friend from university. She knew I was gay. We thought God could change me. We were wrong.

I've known I was gay from before adolescence. But since I was reared in a conservative blue-collar home, this was not an option. My father told me so when, in grade 11 my mother found some pictures of boys I'd torn from the pages of my sister's teenybopper magazines. "A boy—never", he told me.

I had been trying to have girlfriends from grade 8 on. The girl I took to the prom and dated into university asked me why I didn't kiss her like the other boys did their beaus. I eventually made up an excuse of diverse interests to break up with her. I broke her heart, she said.

In university I came out to a couple friends, but was always too fearful and ashamed to do so, afraid to be different and alone.

My late wife and I married in 1978 after graduation. The following year I had an encounter with a man and told her I should leave because I was gay. She told her mom and my parents. My father almost punched me. She insisted we were married and would not leave me. She threatened to tell the pastor of my church. I begged her not to. She relented when I agreed that we would talk with the minister who had married us.

Thus, began a decades-long series of confessions and conversations and therapies to challenge my attraction to men.

Sometimes they were with ministers or therapists. Sometimes with support groups like Exodus International. They involved techniques such as talk therapy, praying, journaling, and carrying around cards with passages of Scripture to read when tempted.

Partially out of guilt I became a minister of the church, even preaching and teaching about the devilish "gay agenda." We had two beautiful daughters. A lovely Christian family living in rural Nebraska and then coming to Ontario in 1990 (and becoming Canadian citizens in 2000).

I loved and cared for my wife and family, and yet, inside, I was dying; chronically depressed and frequently suicidal. In 1990 I bought a bus ticket to Seattle and ran away with just the clothes on my back. But when my wife tracked me down in the bus terminal in Minneapolis I agreed to come home. Hospitalized, a psychiatrist tried to convince me that I needed to face my true nature but I loved my wife, feared hell and believed God knew best. In 1992 I tried to kill myself with carbon monoxide.

More therapy. A marriage recommitment.

One therapist suggested allowing me to use gay pornography, or even have an open marriage. God would not allow it. Soon after we gave up talking about it with one another. The end of sexual relations soon followed.

We loved each other and decided to stay together. Outwardly, I built a successful ministry (eventually becoming an assistant bishop in my conservative Lutheran denomination), continuing with a couple of trusted colleagues to "pray the gay away". Inwardly, I compartmentalized my sexuality into a life of fantasy and the occasional use of pornography. Regular bouts with depression and anxiety were the result.

This is how it remained until out of the blue my wife became ill with cancer in November 2011. Six months following her death in April 2013 I had a crisis of faith and resigned the ministry. I went to work with a social service agency and a couple of months later came out to a lesbian colleague.

I began dating men (a daunting experience after 35 years of marriage), sold my home and almost collapsed in trauma, being hospitalized for a couple of weeks.

In October 2014 I met the man who became my husband. We fell in love. The healing continued. A support group for people coming out older certainly helped.

In 2015 I began work as a Funeral Director Assistant. I volunteer with Spectrum, our local LGBTQ+ community space, including hosting a monthly peer support group called "Converse and Connect". We have joined a social group for GBT men. In 2019 I become licensed by the Clergy Support Memorial Church, which permits to officiate weddings and other life celebrations.

My family and children have come to accept me for who I am and to truly love my husband. He was one of the pallbearers for my mother when she passed in October 2019. My grandson calls him Grandpa.

I must say that I have no desire to turn back the clock. Despite the pain, I am thankful for the life I shared with my late wife and children—and now grandson (whose middle name is based on the first name of the grandmother he never met). Despite the price of shame and guilt I experienced because of religion, I had a meaningful vocation for almost 30 years. I miss the relationships with so many parishioners and colleagues that were lost.

My experiences of conversion therapies were unsuccessful and terribly damaging. The scientific evidence submitted to you demonstrates that it should not be allowed to be practiced in Canada. In my conversations with many I have heard story after story that confirms this reality.

I have hopes that Bill 6 will be passed. In addition, I believe it should include protection for gender identity and gender expression. Too many Canadians life and livelihood have been put in danger because of bias and bigotry.

The bill does not prevent people from voluntarily having conversations and prayers with family and religious leaders. However, it may give further pause to the idea that conversion therapies are of any benefit.