



International Pastors and Leaders Forum

STATEMENT BY THE INTERNATIONAL PASTORS AND LEADERS FORUM ON BILL C-6, “An Act to Amend the Criminal Code (Conversion Therapy)”

The International Pastors and Leaders Forum (IPLF) is a network of Canadian immigrants comprised of about 80 faith leaders and pastors from different nations. Each of these pastors has congregations ranging hundreds and thousands. We are united in our desire to share the good news of the Gospel in Canada and elsewhere and to walk alongside all individuals in their spiritual journey, in a respectful and loving manner. According to our biblical beliefs, we seek to welcome, love, and care for all individuals, including members of the LGBTQ2 community. We are opposed to any form of coercive, manipulative, or degrading practices.

We therefore agree and support the intent of the Government to end forced, abusive and harmful practices designed to change a person's sexual orientation or gender. We acknowledge the dignity of every human person and their free-will, including in matters related to sexuality.

However, IPLF would like to express our concerns on Bill C-6's current wording and especially on the definition of conversion therapy as, "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 behavior" (Section 320.101). Such a broad and ambiguous definition could restrict or harm many legitimate and beneficial activities that support individuals and would violate other rights that are protected by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

In its present state, Bill C-6 would make the following activities unlawful and subject to criminal prosecution and penalties:

- Conversations between children and their parents, family members, or faith leaders on sexual orientation and gender identity, during which the former would legitimately share their values and beliefs regarding sexuality.
- Pastoral counseling or other faith-based activities aimed at helping teenagers who are willingly seeking guidance in pursuing chastity or overcoming destructive sexual behaviors
- Pastoral counseling or other religious counseling services offered to an adult person who requests spiritual direction in understanding their sexual orientation or gender identity

- Public presentations of Biblical teachings and doctrines related to human sexuality and same-sex attraction (including those that express traditional religious beliefs about marriage, sexuality, and gender)

Section 2 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees and protects, as fundamental freedoms, the freedom of conscience and religion as well as freedom of thought, belief, opinion, and expression. These freedoms are upheld not only for the LGBTQ2 community but also for all individuals. We are concerned that Bill C-6 does not seem to take into account differing thoughts, beliefs, opinions, and expressions on human sexuality, including those that arise from religious beliefs.

Moreover, as immigrants, we consider that we have the parental right to raise our children and the next generation according to our legitimate values and religious convictions, through meaningful conversations and educational activities.

We are equally concerned that Bill C-6 seems to be creating a double standard by criminalizing practices "designed to change a person's sexual orientation to heterosexual or gender identity to cisgender" but not the exact same practices when they are designed to lead a heterosexual person, especially young people, into changing their sexual orientation or gender identity.

SUGGESTED AMENDMENTS TO BILL C-6

Based on the above-mentioned concerns, IPLF suggests the following amendments to Bill C-6:

- Conversation therapy should be defined as “any practice, treatment or service that aims to force a person to adopt a particular sexual orientation or gender identity against their will, or to repress or reduce sexual attraction or sexual behaviour against their will”
- The news release¹ posted on the website of Ministry of Justice on Bill C-6 indicates that the offenses “would not apply to those who provide support to persons questioning their sexual orientation, sexual feelings or gender identity (such as teachers, school counselors, pastoral counselors, faith leaders, doctors, mental health professionals, friends or family members)”. This exception should be included in the Bill itself so that the scope of the law is not left to anyone

¹ <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-justice/news/2020/09/federal-government-reintroduces-legislation-to-criminalize-conversion-therapy-related-conduct-in-canada.html>

else's interpretation, and the type of "support" that remains lawful should be clearly indicated.

We remain committed to contribute to the well-being of our communities and of Canadian society, by promoting justice, love, and faith.

It is our hope that our concerns will be taken into account and that Bill C-6 will be worded in a way that fulfills its original and commendable intent, which is to prevent the harm caused by conversion therapy, in its true sense, and thereby protect the human dignity.

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