

Many thanks to Members of the Justice Committee for your time and diligent efforts to make sure Bill C-6 is worded in the best possible way.

I have serious concerns about the definition of conversion therapy in Bill C-6. If it's passed in its present form, it would be very harmful. The definition needs to be changed.

Abusive or degrading forms of conversion therapy are, of course, wrong and should be banned. So should "causing a person to undergo conversion therapy against their will" as proposed in Bill C-6. (I especially appreciate that, in its current wording, Bill C-6 does not criminalize therapy that is voluntarily sought by individuals. I hope this distinction is not changed as you consider revisions to the Bill.)

But children and teens (and adults too) who seek counselling because they're struggling with unwanted same-sex attraction, or struggling to find their own identity, should be free to do so, just as the Charter of Rights gives them freedom to seek counselling for any other perceived problem. In its present form, Bill C-6 bans children and teens and their parents from seeing a counsellor voluntarily to get the help they need and want.

The Department of Justice website on Bill C-6 <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/csj-sjc/pl/ct-tc/index.html> states, in the "**Scientific Evidence**" section,

"According to the 2011-2012 results of the Sex Now Survey, exposure to conversion therapy is positively associated with negative psychosocial health outcomes such as loneliness, regular illicit drug use, suicidal ideation and suicide attempt."

This study, "Under the Lens of the Investigaytors – SexNow 2011" was one of the worst studies carried out on this subject; the sampling methods were so poor that they rendered any conclusions meaningless. It was not published in any reputable journal because none would accept it.

No other studies are cited on this website except for preliminary findings of a 2019-2020 study by the same group. Nor are any studies cited on the accompanying website "Support for legislation to criminalize conversion therapy-related conduct (Bill C-8)". Many other studies, published in reputable peer-reviewed journals, found very different results from the flawed "Sex Now" paper. (See list of References below). One example (Karten & Wade 2010), a study published in a peer-reviewed journal, was a study of 117 men dissatisfied with their same-sex attraction who had pursued sexual orientation change efforts. The authors found that after treatment there were

- statistically significant increases in heterosexual self-identity and in heterosexual feelings and behavior
- and a statistically significant decrease in reported homosexual feelings and behavior

And did the men suffer harm as a result of the therapy? Damaged self-esteem? Increased depression? Suicides?

On the contrary, they experienced very significant positive changes in psychological well-being. For example, over 90% reported

- increases in self-esteem,

- and decreases in depression.

There was also a significant decrease in thoughts & attempts of suicide.

In a similar peer-reviewed study, Jones and Yarhouse (2009) concluded “We found no evidence that the attempt to change sexual orientation was harmful on average for these individuals (p.9) though the study followed subjects for 6-7 years.

Here’s another example: After a survey of over 700 individuals who had undergone “conversion therapy”, Nicolosi et al. (2000) reported in *Psychological Reports* that ‘subjects reported large improvements in their psychological, interpersonal, and spiritual well-being”.

Also, contrary to what you may have heard, there is now overwhelming evidence that sexual orientation is not immutable - it can be changed.

Even Dr. Lisa Diamond (see References below), a highly respected researcher on sexual fluidity, a lesbian herself, and a champion of LGBTQ2 rights, has been stating emphatically since 2013 that sexual orientation is NOT immutable. In a lecture at Cornell University she stated (quote) “excellent and abundant research has now established that sexual orientation is fluid for both adolescents and adults and for both genders”.

And there is now abundant research showing that many people with unwanted same-sex attractions have found relief through sexual orientation change therapy efforts.

The studies cited above are example of such research. There are many other studies like this – too many to cite here. But here are three review articles that summarized and analysed the research:

- In 2009 The Journal of Human Sexuality published an exhaustive survey of studies, mostly peer-reviewed, exploring efforts to alter sexual orientation. They concluded “125 years of clinical and scientific reports have documented that volitional change from homosexuality toward heterosexuality is possible”. They also concluded “a fair consideration of all of the literature reveals consistent and compelling evidence that some individuals can change sexual identity”.
- In the last 3 years a similar exhaustive review was repeated by another researcher, Dr. Laura Haynes, who came to the same conclusions.
- And in 2018 Dr. Peter Sprigg published a review of six recent studies. (Again, these were all studies of people who wanted help in reducing same-sex attraction.) The author reported “all of these studies show that sexual orientation change efforts can be effective for some clients in bringing about significant change in some components of sexual orientation. Few harms were reported”. He went on to say “These studies make it clear that the evidence for the effectiveness of sexual orientation change efforts far outweighs the evidence of its harm.”

Recommendations: Please have compassion on children and teens (and adults too) who suffer from unwanted same-sex attraction. Individuals who are suffering an internal struggle with their identity should not be prohibited from talking to a counsellor about this struggle, and

coming to their own conclusions. Please don't pass legislation that would violate their human rights by banning them from obtaining the counselling they need and want. Please don't criminalize professional and/or religious counseling voluntarily requested and consented to by these individuals or their parents.

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