

Parliamentary Brief

Re: Bill C-6 (Conversion Therapy)

Submitted by April Halley, Coordinator for the Newfoundland and
Labrador Branch of the
Women's Human Rights Campaign

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Introduction

I am the coordinator for the Newfoundland and Labrador chapter of the Women Human Rights Campaign (WHRC). On behalf the female volunteers in this group I would like to relate our strong objection to the inclusion of the term “gender identity” in Bill C-6 (conversion therapy). We are concerned that this bill will intimidate and criminalize health care professionals who object to the inappropriate medical experiments currently being meted out to children under the misnomer ‘gender treatments’.

Why We Hold This Firm Stance

Gay conversion therapy is abusive and unsupported by science. No health care system or mental health body in Canada endorses any form of gay conversion therapy. We certainly would not object to this legislation were it merely pertaining to a ban on gay conversion therapy. But the inclusion of “gender identity” to this bill is illogical and dangerous, especially to girls with autism or mental health issues. In the UK an investigation was launched after it was revealed that there had been an over 4000% increase in referrals of girls to gender clinics¹.

Gender is a nebulous concept rooted in sex-based stereotypes. A child that breaks retrograde stereotypes should not be pathologized. “Gender identity” therefore has no relationship with sexual orientation. “Gender identity” treatments include the cessation of puberty in a healthy child through the experimental prescribing of off label drugs. Gender treatments can lead to a child’s sterilization and the destruction of their potential for adult sexual functioning. The WHRC fears that health care professionals who justifiably object to such inappropriate interference in the healthy development of a child will feel pressured to go against their conscience due to the potential for imprisonment should they be criminalized by this bill. It is our deep conviction that proceeding with this bill, as written, is unacceptable.

In 2018 Dr. Lisa Littman published a study² composed of data collected from parents’ observations, experiences, and perspectives about their adolescent and young adult children’s apparent sudden development of gender dysphoria in and around the onset of puberty. Worryingly Littman found that the majority (62.5%) of these children had been diagnosed with at least one mental health issue or neurodevelopmental disability prior to the onset of gender dysphoria. The impetus for Dr. Littman’s study was the apparent phenomenon of peer contagion among young people wherein transgender identification spreads from one to the other within a peer group, at times with even entire peer groups identifying with this label. In the light that this

¹<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-6172097/Investigation-ordered-number-transitioning-referrals-increase-four-thousand-cent.html>

² : Littman L (2018) Parent reports of adolescents and young adults perceived to show signs of a rapid onset of gender dysphoria. PLoS ONE 13(8): e0202330. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0202330>

label is frequently being placed on young females with complicated mental health issues we not only request that “gender identity” be removed from this bill but that, like the UK, the Canadian government engages in a study to unearth why so many young girls are experiencing this level of distress with their bodies.

It is well worth noting that Canada ratified the United Nations Rights of the Child. Article 6³ of this declaration states that “children have the right to live. Governments should ensure that children survive and develop in a healthy way”.

Summary

The inclusion of the undefinable term “gender identity” alongside “sexual orientation” in Bill C-6 (conversion therapy) is illogical and possesses a danger to the integrity of the health care system as well as to the long term mental and physical health of vulnerable children.

Recommendation

We strongly recommend the removal of the term “gender identity” from this legislation and the implementation of a study to determine why so many vulnerable girls are seeking to physically alter their bodies.

Women's Human Rights Campaign (WHRC) is a group of volunteer women from across the globe dedicated to protecting women's sex-based rights. Our volunteers include academics, writers, organizers, activists, and health practitioners, and aim to represent the total breadth of the human female experience.

The [Declaration on Women's Sex Based Rights](#) was created by the founders of WHRC to lobby nations to maintain language protecting

³ <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/rights-children.html>

women and girls on the basis of sex rather than "gender" or "gender identity".