

May 25, 2016

Honorable David Eggen
Constituency Office
Unit A, 10212 127 Avenue
Edmonton, AB
Canada T5E 0B8

Dear Minister Eggen,

Re: Comprehensive Sexuality Education

Respectfully, as our Minister of Education, you have been placed in a position of trust and representation of all Alberta parents as it pertains to the education of our children. We look to you to lead us in a way that is representative of the diversity of parents and their children in Alberta – whether they attend public, private, charter or religious schools.

As I have contemplated the issue of Bill 10, the Guidelines for Best Practices, and Comprehensive Sexuality Education and done much reading in this regard, I cannot deny that several important questions are left unanswered and many points left out of the discussion as it pertains to the health and safety of our children.

Our province is full of diversity. I understand that this diversity must be respected, honored and tolerated in order for everyone to feel comfortable and safe. Within the diversity of Alberta, there are families who have deeply held beliefs which pertain to human sexuality, gender, and levels of appropriate discussion regarding said topics, and what is morally correct/incorrect will vary depending on which family you ask. This is okay and to be expected. Any subjective opinion regarding gender, sexuality, consent, sexual rights, and sexual pleasure must be considered ideology. The issue with Bill 10 is that it creates a vacuum whereby ideology can now come parading into our schools in all its forms. Education is now being replaced by ideology.

In these following statements Alberta Education has said:

"Teachers should use controversial issues to promote critical inquiry rather than advocacy, and to teach students how to think rather than what to think."

"Schools play a supportive role to parents in the areas of values and moral development, and should handle parental decisions about controversial issues with respect and sensitivity."

"To make healthy lifestyle decisions, children and youth depend on support from the people around them. Families, peers, school staff and community members can influence and reinforce health. The comprehensive school health approach strengthens support networks and encourages active involvement of key people in the learning process. Support includes:

- **parental involvement**
- *mentors*
- *peer support*
- *community participation and development*
- *family wellness programs*
- *staff wellness programs*

(from page 38 & 39: <https://education.alberta.ca/media/1477143/healthgi.pdf>):

In this regard, Alberta Education has specifically declared that advocacy on behalf of ideology is not to be used to promote controversial issues, that schools are to be supportive to parental decisions, that respect and sensitivity must be given on these topics, and that parental involvement and families are top of the list of support.

With all due respect, there are certain aspects of this process with Bill 10, Guidelines and now a “sexual health” curriculum re-write that I find alarming. Amongst many, here are 2 main concerns:

- 1) Alberta Education is brushing aside established values. This infringes upon very basic freedoms, such as Freedom of Belief and Freedom of Religion and parent’s “*prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.*” (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 26). To question gender diversity as part of a child’s schooling when it goes against deeply held values does not make parents homophobic or bigoted. It makes them diverse from those who support gender ideology. No one should force a person to learn something that goes against his/her belief system. This is not in harmony with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and hurts children by confusing them and pitting the information they learn about in school against the values they are taught at home. In my opinion, tremendous care needs to be exercised when teaching subjects pertaining to a sexual nature and exposing children to new ideas. This is why Bill 10 must be amended. It is obvious that some advocacy groups are louder than others. This does not mean that opposing views don’t feel as deeply about their beliefs. It just means that they refrain from infringing their values upon others as a courtesy. The Alberta government needs to respect all diversity as well, not just those who advocate the loudest.
- 2) Bringing gender ideology into schools without addressing the needs of the whole child or other children within the school:
 - a. *The child struggling with gender:* There is ample suggestion right within Kristopher Wells’ work that these children have multiple other issues besides gender confusion. If these children are indeed at a high risk for suicide, it seems very risky – maybe even negligent on behalf of Alberta Education - to only address their sexuality concerns through GSAs or school counselors, while refraining to address the child’s other issues. To assume in *loco parentis* when it comes to deeply personal matters such as sexuality is, I believe, inappropriate on

behalf of Alberta Ed. Parents must remain the primary educators – and nurturers - of their children – especially these children, except in rare and unique circumstances, in which case the school is obliged to refer the child to other systems, which are already in place for these sorts of challenges.

- b. *The child who has a social, emotional or cognitive need:* To assume that all children are at the cognitive ability to understand gender preference choices, sexual consent, and anything under the rainbow of CSE is very alarming to parents who deal with the ins and outs of raising a child with a cognitive impairment or emotional challenges. Many parents are frustrated because the needs of this diverse group of kids have not been considered in the creation of Bill 10. If schools stick to basics, this aids in the clarity of teaching children with diverse emotional, social, or cognitive needs – which affects approximately 1 in 10 children in school. These children are vulnerable and at risk and must be considered in these decisions.
- c. *The child who has been sexually abused or who is currently suffering from abuse:* As this pertains to children’s education, sexual discussions of any nature in school could potentially be very traumatizing to a child who has been sexually abused. Because we are looking at around 1 in 4 children who have been sexually abused, this should be of utmost concern to Alberta Education when entertaining the idea of adding “consent” to Sexuality Education re-write in Alberta. These children must be considered in what is appropriate classroom discussion. Several situations that I am personally aware of involved sexual abuse of a man to a boy. When talking freely about gender preferences and then peppering it with talk of “comprehensive” sexuality education regarding gender, rights, pleasure, and consent, my opinion is that this is very damaging to a child who has been subjected to abuse involving all of these things. Thoughtful sensitivity must be extended to these children.

Regardless of the above, much of what the world now considers as “comprehensive sexuality education” is in reality, not age appropriate. To equip a child with knowledge of this degree when children are not developmentally ready for the responsibility of sexual consequences is reckless.

Additionally, it very important that issues of *how* and by *whom* sexual health is taught are considered. As Alberta Education “*plays a supportive role to parents in the areas of values and moral development*”, anything pertaining to sexual health or relating to gender-based ideas must be not merely opt-out, but opt-IN. As a parent with 5 children ages 7-18 in the public school, I sign multiple permissions slips each year. I would expect nothing less as it pertains to anything of a sexual nature that may contradict my children’s home values. Schools should *always* require a signature from a parent indicating full knowledge of *what, how* and *by whom* this material is being taught, while always leaving a parent the opportunity to opt-IN - or remain out - if they feel this education is not appropriate for their child, with no consequences to that child. Communication between parents and their child’s school must be abundantly clear with an opt-IN form for each and every time education of a sexual nature is taught. There

should be nothing of a sexual nature “embedded” and “infused” into our children’s curriculum. This is highly inappropriate if Alberta Education truly respects parental decisions and wishes to handle *“controversial issues with respect and sensitivity”*.

Lastly, in studying many aspects of Comprehensive Sexuality Education, it is my conclusion that this is not merely sexual health. In fact, it has very little to do with health and more to do with ideology. Consent, sexual right to pleasure and gender ideology are all subjective and controversial topics and tied in with deeply held values for many Alberta parents. For many, these ideas are offensive and infringe upon a parent’s *“prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.”*

I’ve not yet seen what Alberta Education is proposing, but it is important to note that much of what is referred to as “comprehensive sexual education” curriculum throughout the world has many issues, and many parents are speaking out in other states and provinces as well for the exact reasons I have outlined above. As you are someone with influence on these matters, I encourage you to review these important resources that bring parental concerns regarding CSE to the forefront:

www.stopCSE.org

www.miriamgrossmanmd.com - Dr. Grossman also has an excellent video on YouTube about the problems with Ontario’s new CSE curriculum:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=21YvYPD56-U>

Mr. Eggen, this is such an important crossroads in the development of our children’s education. In an effort to be “progressive” and “forward thinking”, we must always bear in mind the safety, security, and comfort levels of ALL children in Alberta, and other human rights and freedoms must be balanced in respecting diversity. I ask, with respect, that you please consider my concerns as they pertain to Comprehensive Sexuality Education, Bill 10 and the forceful nature of the Guidelines for Best Practices. The “Best Practice” is to always give the opportunity to parents to be first in their child’s education.

Thank you very much for meeting with us today to discuss our concerns as parents and as representatives of thousands of other concerned parents throughout Alberta.

Sincerely,

Sara Lyn Baril

www.parentchoice.ca

www.prochildrenalberta.org

www.standup4families.org